



'1885' A DRAMA OF THE VISIT BY GENERAL SIR CHARLES WARREN TO THE COURT OF KING SECHELE
at the town of Molepolole on the 27th of April in that year, replete with illustrations and annotations; to which is annexed a further account of the Kweneng sojourn from the Diamond Fields Times, along with a profile of Sechele & additional notes compiled by Jeff Ramsay
Cover photo: King Sechele of the Bakwena (colourised).

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I - INTRODUCTION

In 1985, members of the University of Botswana (UB) History Department commemorated the centenary of the founding of the Bechuanaland Protectorate with a weekly seminar series. In lieu of a keynote lecture, the event began with a play, simply titled '1885,' which was produced and performed by UB staff and students.¹ The drama was based on the minutes of the April 27, 1885, meeting held at Molepolole, where Major-General Sir Charles Warren, in his capacity as Special Commissioner and commander of the "Bechuanaland Expedition," first informed Kgosi Sechele of the British Government's decision to extend its authority over "Bechuanaland and the Kalahari" up to the 22nd parallel south latitude. The UB Library had acquired the Bechuanaland volumes of the Irish University Press series of British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), which conveniently included the official transcript of the meeting. In this context, this author and Andrew Murray worked on adapting the minutes for the stage, while adding introductory scenes to frame the story. This task benefited from the collective contributions from others in the department and wider UB community.²

¹ Members of Department, then headed by Michael Crowder, included Leonard Ngcongco, Fred Morton, Themba Mgatla, Rogers Molefi, David Kiyaga-Mulindwa and Rex Omara. This author was then affiliated as associate through U.B National Institute of Research (N.I.R.).

² Additional contributors notably included Neil Parsons, then a resident scholar, and Victor Mtubani in the English Department, who was the moving force behind the popular UB Travelling Theatre. Mtubani and Ngcongco ended up exchanging the roles of Sechele and Kgosi dints, with Mgatla and Molefi acting as Sebele and Kgari respectively and Ian MacFarlane, Derek Lindfield and Frank Youngman assuming the roles of Warren and Mackenzie.

Also reproduced in this volume is a lengthy article "Sir Charles Warren at Sechele's", which was originally published in the May 12, 1885 edition of the *Diamond Field Times*.³ Ghost written by Warren's Private Secretary, Sir George Baden-Powell, the news report contains an alternative set of minutes of the General's meeting at Molepolole. In addition, the report includes a purported account of a private meeting that took place between Sechele, who was joined by his sons Sebele and Kgari, and Major Sam Edwards accompanied by Baden-Powell. Held within the walls of Sechele's house a day prior to Warren's arrival, the account provides further insight into the Bakwena leaders concerns about the nature of the Protectorate.

Also included in this volume is a postscript on developments leading up to Warren's September 1885 recall and a note on the February 1891 Bramston Memorandum that thereafter legally defined Britain's authority over the Bechuanaland Protectorate. The monograph concludes with a short profile of Kgosi Sechele I.

Setting the Stage: The 1885 Bechuanaland Expedition

On December 4, 1884, Sir Charles Warren disembarked from the ship "Grantully Castle" at Cape Town to assume command of the "Bechuanaland Expedition." His arrival came in the shadow of the Berlin Conference on Africa and ongoing conflict between southern Batswana (Batlhaping and Barolong reinforced by Bangwaketse) and "Transvaal filibustering Boers" that claimed the life of British Army liaison officer Christopher Bethell, as well as disruption of transit in the region. In this context, the British Government had decided to establish a Bechuanaland Field Force to impose its authority in the region.⁴

Warren, then a celebrated Lieutenant Colonel who had written a popular account of his previous campaign in Bechuanaland (south of the Molopo), was selected for the command of the expedition, being given the local

³ "Sir Charles Warren at Sechele's" *Diamond Fields Times* (Kimberley) 12 May 1885, reprinted in PRO CO (Colonial Office) 879/24/317 with cover letter Robinson to Derby 20 May 1885. A Dutch transcript of the meeting was later published by Kruger's security chief, Dr W.J. Leydes in *Het Insluiten van de Boeren-Republieken*, two volumes (Amsterdam, 1914) Vol 2, 271-75.

⁴ Relevant official papers on Warren's appointment and Expedition in PRO CO 879/22/292 and BPP C.4227. There are various accounts of the expedition, notably including Ralph Williams *The British Lion in Bechuanaland* (London, 1885) and John Mackenzie *Austral Africa, Losing It or Ruling It*, two volumes (London, 1887). The Expedition received extensive contemporary press coverage including in *The Graphic*, *Illustrated London News*, *The Diamond Field Times*, *The Colonies and India*, and *The Standard* (London), which are cited in the document.

rank of Major General and appointed Special Commissioner. At the beginning of January, 1885 he had assembled a formidable force of about 4000 men incorporating regular British Army reinforced by recruits from the Cape Colony; i.e. the Inniskillings, the Royal Scots, one battery Royal Artillery, one battery local artillery, one company of Engineers, one company Commissariat, and three volunteer regiments of Mounted Infantry. The force was accompanied by observation balloons, which were the first to ever be deployed by the British Army in the field.⁵

On January 22, 1885, Warren confronted the President of the South African Republic (SAR/Transvaal), Paul Kruger, at the Modder River. Kruger tried to stop the expedition, claiming he would be responsible for maintaining order on the Bechuanaland border. His request was denied. Having rapidly imposed its authority over Bechuanaland south of the Molopo, on January 27, 1885, London issued an Order-in-Council extending its suzerainty over the area north of the Cape Colony, south of the twenty-second parallel, west of the South African Republic (SAR), and east of the twentieth meridian of east longitude.

This extension of British authority into modern Botswana thwarted potential German expansion from the Namibian coast towards the SAR, while securing a path for further imperial expansion into central Africa. Having notified Berlin of its ambition, London instructed Warren to communicate the new status quo to "Kings" Sechele of the Bakwena and Khama.⁶ Opting to communicate with the pair in person, the General set out in April 1885, for Molepolole and Shoshong, crossing the Molopo with a small force never numbering more than seventy men.⁷ The timing was appropriate, as a German military reconnaissance would arrive in Shoshong a few weeks later. In response, London claimed a sphere of influence up to the Zambezi River, pending further discussion with Berlin.⁸

⁵ "With Sir C. Warren's Expedition" *The Standard* (London), January 6, 1885

⁶ PRO CO 879/22/292- CO to Foreign Office (FO) 14 March and FO to CO 20 March 1885.

⁷ Mackenzie, *Austral Africa*, vol. 2, p. 23, wrote: "...the Special Commissioner left Mafeking on the 20th April on his way northward. Sir Charles was accompanied by Mr. Baden-Powell, C.M.G., who had already spent some time in Bechuanaland, and who was much interested in the settlement of that country, as well as of other parts of South Africa; by Sir Bartle Frere, A.D.C.; Surgeon-Major Jazdowski; Captain M. F. Walker, Military Secretary; Lieutenant A. E. Haynes, Private Secretary; Captain Warren; and Lieutenants A. Bethell and Perring, Intelligence Department; and by an escort of some twenty men of the 2nd Mounted Rifles, under Lieutenant Lord Clandeboye. Heliographic communication had preceded the laying of the telegraph throughout the whole of Bechuanaland, and was established between Molepolole and Mafeking, while the Special Commissioner was in North Bechuanaland."

⁸ 20. BPP C.4839 Goold-Adams Report of 8 December in Robinson to Stanley 30 December 1885. PRO CO 879/23/305 Upington to Robinson 30 December in Robinson to Stanley 20 January 1886. National Archives of Namibia (NAN) ZBU 1857 U IV containing July 1886 map showing German claims in northern Botswana.

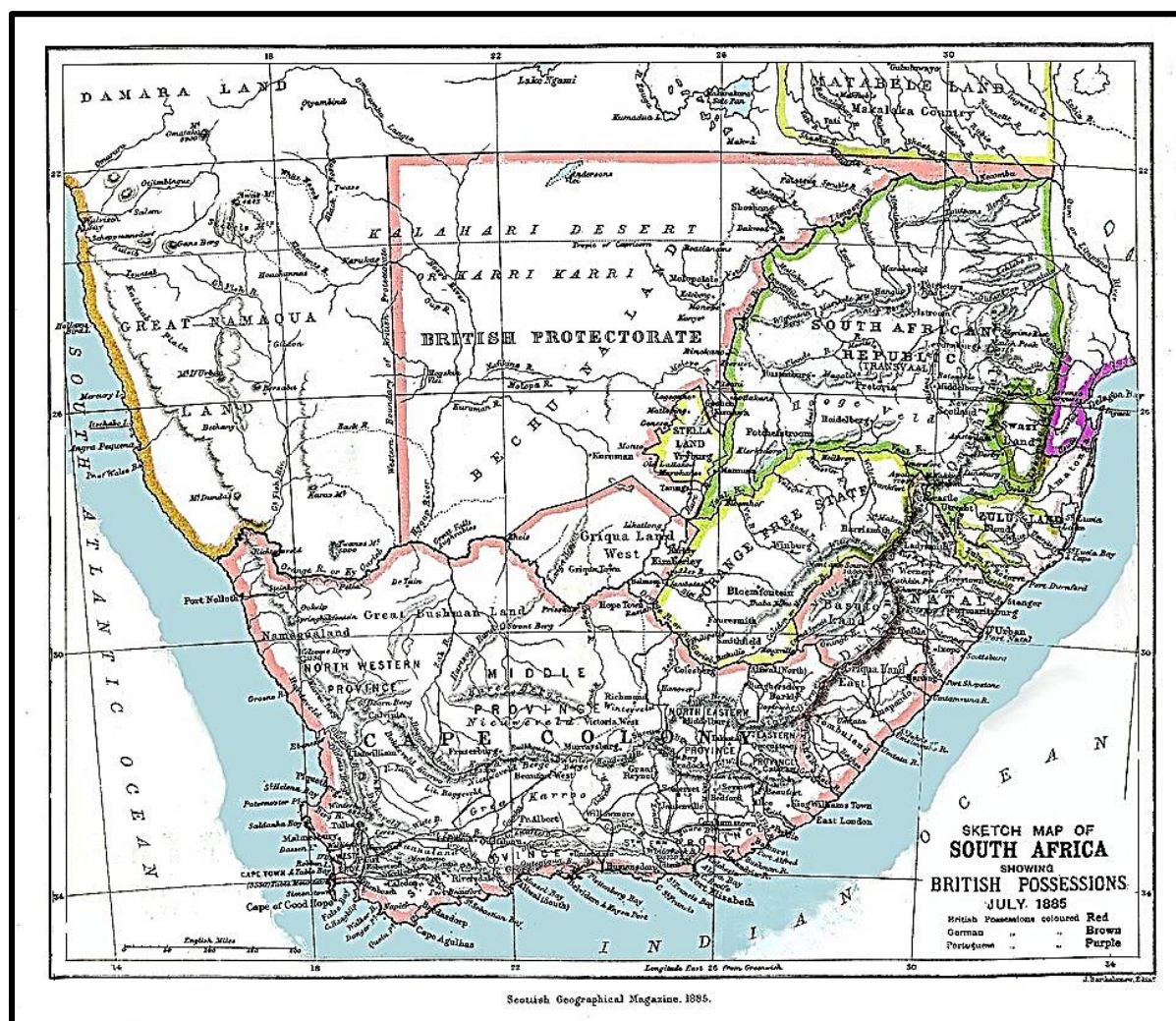


Fig. 1: July 1885 map showing the extension of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from The Scottish Geographical Magazine.

By the time he crossed the Molopo, General Warren's biggest adversaries were internal. The British High Commissioner in South Africa, Sir Hercules Robinson, and others, notably including Cecil Rhodes, were opposed to the Special Commissioner's desire to go beyond his restricted mandate by promoting the establishment of British rule over Bechuanaland as a full-scale Crown Colony. Along with the Rev. John Mackenzie, whom Warren recruited as his Special Advisor, Warren wished to develop the region as an imperial bulwark independent of both the Cape Colony and the Boer Republics. With the Barolong Kgosi Montshiwa and Batlhaping Kgosi Mankurwane having already signed treaties welcoming the Protectorate, Warren was thus keen to obtain similar endorsements from Gaseitsiwe's Bangwaketse, Khama's Bangwato, and Sechele's Bakwena.

- Jeff Ramsay

II - '1885' BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE VISIT BY GENERAL SIR CHARLES WARREN TO THE COURT OF KING SECHELE at the town of Molepolole on the 27th of April in that year...

This play is a historical reconstruction of events that took place in Botswana one hundred years ago. It is based largely upon the Kgotla minutes recorded at the time, with only minor additions and deletions.

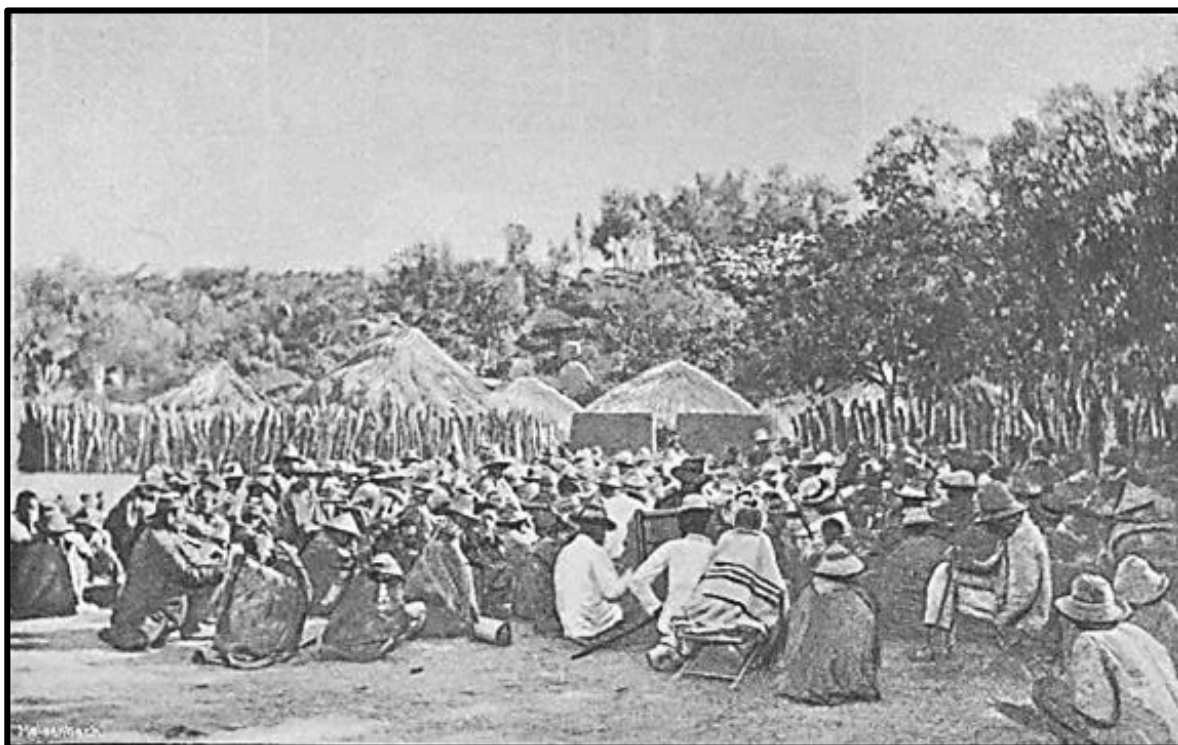


Fig. 2: Sechele's kgotla, photo of the April 27, 1885 meeting with General Sir Charles Warren, by Lieutenant Haynes of the Bechuanaland Field Force

OUR PLAY BEGINS.

PROLOGUE

This play is a curtain-raiser for the History Department's seminar series: "A Botswana Centennial: A Hundred Years since the Protectorate," which commemorates the declaration of the Protectorate by the British in 1885. Each week, at this time, a variety of themes will be explored relating to the founding of the Protectorate: political boundaries; ecological crises; the history of the Police force; education; administration; economic development; the origins of nationalism in Botswana; and local studies of the reaction to the declaration. We hope that you will be able to find the time to attend and perhaps contribute to these seminars. Tonight, however, is a dramatic rather than an academic event.

The play itself has been largely adapted from the actual Kgotla minutes taken at the time, thus this is not a work of fiction but an attempt to reconstruct the past.

Let me set the scene for you. In 1884, General Sir Charles Warren had been charged by the British Government with clearing out the Boers from the areas known today as Vryburg and Mafeking. In order to achieve this objective, he had established British rule south of the Molopo River in the form of a Protectorate. No one really knew what a Protectorate entailed for either the ruler or the ruled. However, the following year, Warren succeeded in convincing his superiors that British “protection” should be extended north of the Molopo into the region known today as Botswana. This was done by a unilateral British proclamation in March 1885 without any consultation with the people of Botswana. This dramatic British action was motivated in large part by the fear that if they did not secure Botswana for themselves, it could fall into the hands of either the Germans in Namibia or the Boers in the Transvaal.

To make the Protectorate a reality, General Sir Charles Warren went north with the famous missionary, John Mackenzie. Their mission was to secure treaties of acceptance of the Protectorate from the three recognised Kings at the time: Gaseitsiwe of the Bangwaketse, Sechele of the Bakwena, and Khama of the Bangwato.

This is a play about one of these meetings, which took place in the court of King Sechele in Molepolole on 26th and 27th April 1885. Warren had already seen Gaseitsiwe but no agreement had been made as the Bangwaketse wanted to wait to see what would happen with Sechele and Khama. In fact, Warren knew he could count on Khama to accept the Protectorate since Khama had asked for British protection in the recent past. This meant that Sechele's decision was crucial to the success of his mission. After all, Sechele was recognised as the elder and senior statesman among the Tswana at this time. He also claimed territory that stretched from Namibia to the Transvaal. Sechele had had contact with the Boers and the Germans as well as the British. Without his cooperation, the establishment of the Bechuanaland Protectorate could prove to be difficult.

So, at a campfire outside Molepolole, on the evening of the 25th of April 1885, Warren and Mackenzie were anxiously discussing the meeting, which lay ahead of them...

SCENE I

(Early evening, a campfire, Warren is writing his book. Mackenzie stands, looking north and taking notes.) – 2 chairs and a desk

Mackenzie - Molepolole...Kgotla...Ready (Closes notebook, turns and walks to the desk) Sir Charles it appears that Sechele is prepared to meet with us to tomorrow.

Warren - Anything from Kanye?

Mackenzie - The heliograph has not flashed from the South all day.

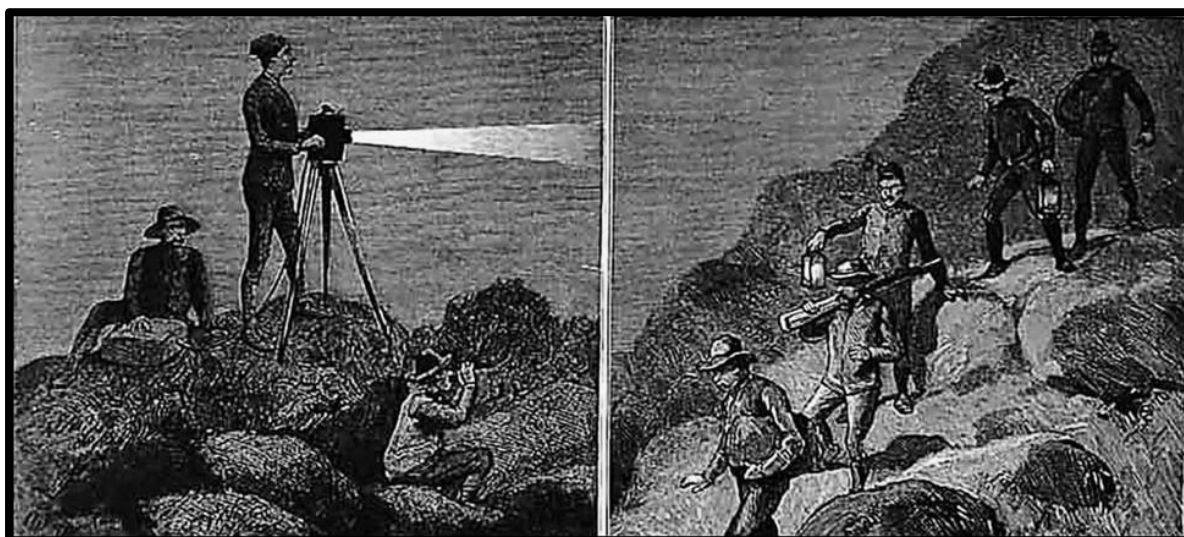


Fig. 3: "Signalling from Molepolole to Kanye (forty miles) by limelight" *The Graphic*, July 25, 1885, "With Charles Warren in Bechuanaland"

Warren - Anyway, Gaseitsiwe seemed to be friendly enough, don't you think?

Mackenzie - Yes...but you know, Sir Charles, it is the Crown Prince, Bathoen, who calls the shot in Kanye these days. He will not commit himself until he hears how we do in Molepolole tomorrow."

Warren - Sechele is a crafty old fox, who knows which way he will jump? (Gets up from the desk, waving a newspaper angrily) And look Mackenzie, what they are saying about us in London! (Reads) "General Sir Charles Warren was not sent out to Africa to build an empire. His task was simply to bring to book the murderous filibusters in the Boer 'republics' of Mafeking and Vryburg. Let us praise him for completing

that task by declaring a south of the Molopo. Now, however, that the rabble has been dispersed there is no longer any necessity for his continued presence in the region. Yet we hear that Sir Charles and that interfering cleric Mackenzie have now moved north of the Molopo, no doubt with the intention of involving the British taxpayer with yet more expense. We echo the sentiments of the Cape Government in this matter: the Molopo River is the limit of the interest and the influence of England and should remain so." Hah! Damned Little Englanders! We cannot stop at the Molopo, not with the Germans in the West and the Boers in the East. If we don't move now, and quickly, the whole of the interior of Africa will fall to those jackals.

Mackenzie – "Molopo's our utmost limit, further north we dare not go, *Terram terribilem*, I deem it full of antelopes, you know."

(Both men laugh, pour another tea.)

Warren - London does not support us now. But if we can get agreements from the native kings, it will have no choice but to see things our way. Now, how shall we deal with Sechele? You know the man. Have done for twenty years, what do you suggest?

Mackenzie - Well, Sechele is not the only man we have to worry about, Sir Charles. The biggest problem is likely to be Sebele his 'Prince of Wales'. He would just as soon deal with the Boers as us. In fact he speaks bastard Dutch well enough to pass for a Boer but for his dusky face."

Warren - And who is this Kgari?

Mackenzie - Kgari, oh he's one of Sechele's bastard children, but the old King favours him. In fact, he's Khama's cousin, and indeed, he seems less heathenish than Sebele, though he's just as addicted to drink... Now he may end up supporting us just to oppose his half-brother whom he hopes eventually to usurp.

Warren - But surely our only reliable friend is Sechele's brother, the arch heathen Kgosidintsi?

Mackenzie - Yes, he has been a good friend of Britain since the days of Livingstone. But in the end Sechele will have to consider the opinions of

his entire council, God willing, Kgosidintsi Will be able to carry the majority with him.

Warren - I hope so, you know Mackenzie, I am taking a great risk with this venture, more than just my career depends on it, We have to gamble that these natives know what's good for 'em, eh?



Fig. 4: "Molepolole, Chief Town of the Bechuanas" *The Graphic*, July 25, 1885.

SCENE 2

(It is morning; a well-dressed Sebele is sitting outside his house, drinking from a calabash of sorghum beer. He is joined by his half-brother and potential rival Kgari, who is also wearing European attire, but not as refined as Sebele's. The two men drink but not to a state of drunkenness; Kgari comes in and sits.)

Sebele – Hello my younger brother, how did you rise?

Kgari - I rose well Mothubabantwa, and yourself?⁹

⁹ Sebele is the leader of the Mothubantwa mophato or age regiment whose name means "ones who ban win the war". Sebele's failure to defeat the Bakgatla at Mochudi in 1875 had turned the praise name into a mocking epitaph.



Fig. 5: Gathering at Sebele I's home c. 1890, Botswana National Archives.

Sebele – I rose with great fear in my heart for I know that today the whites have come to eat us!

Kgari – Yes, I see you're dressed for dinner. (Pause) I admit these white made me uneasy also – yesterday I saw one sitting in the sky looking down at us!

Sebele – It is not their airships that worry me it is this (Sebele shows Kgari a news account of Warren's Bechuanaland Expedition etc.) This English lion with eyes of glass (pointing at a picture of Warren) its stomach still warmed by the meat of its relatives in Mafikeng now comes for our father's table. If the old rabbit is clever, he will stay away from the stew.¹⁰

¹⁰ General Warren wore a monocle, resulting in him being known as "Ragalase" among Batswana. Warren's nephew, Christopher Bethell had been killed in a battle between the Barolong and Boers on July 31, 1884. At the time Bethell had taken up a sinecure post as a British liaison officer with the Barolong at Mahikeng, where he had married a Morolong woman named Tepo Baobile, who gave birth to his daughter, Grace, ten days after his death. The circumstances of Bethell's death - found wounded, he had been tortured and then shot dead by the Boers, who were apparently disgusted that he had 'gone native' and taken up arms on behalf of his in-laws. When the inhabitants of Mahikeng subsequently learned that General Warren had been appointed Special Commissioner for Bechuanaland and was on his way north with four thousand British troops, the development was widely interpreted, and from the British side, partially justified, as an act to avenge Bethell's death. For a full account of the role of Bethell see Manson, A. *Christopher Bethell and the securing of the Bechuanaland frontier, 1878-1884* (2007).

Kgari – I hear you, but I would not be surprised if it is the lion who ends up leaving the table chewing its own tail.

Sebele – Perhaps God will be so kind, but you know, sometimes in old age the rabbit becomes too clever for its own skin. If we are to have a kingdom to rule, our only hope is to remain fully sovereign. We can use our trade with the Boers to thwart the whites.¹¹

Kgari - When I hear of the Boers, I remember the sting of their sjamboks against my back, while you had missionaries to dry your childhood tears at Kudumane. I was a slave in the Transvaal. Boer beatings made me a man. They were my true bogwera! You are lucky, for you the Boers are men to do business with over brandy.¹²

(Sebele takes out a small bottle of brandy from his coat and pours some into his brother's calabash.)

Sebele – I hear you brother. I do not like the Boers any better than you do. But when a Boer comes to our father's house, at least he is open with his designs, whether he is carrying brandy or a sjambok. However, these English, they come carrying a Bible in one hand and a gun in the other, a gun washed in the blood of fallen Zulu regiments. Such men will always fill my heart with fear. As far as the missionaries go, they have always treated me as their dog!

Kgari – I hear you brother, but now our father calls us to the kgotla.

Sebele – Let us go, as one if we are together our father will listen.

(They leave together, Sebele begins singing "On ward Christian soldiers and is joined by Kgari)

¹¹ At the time Sebele and other Bakwena often differentiated between "makgoa" or whites and "maburu" or Boers.

¹² As a boy Kgari had been among the some 200 children captured by the Boers during the August 30, 1852 battle at Dimawe. He was subsequently bought by the Boer leader Andries Pretorius, who had him returned to Sebele in January of 1853, as a prerequisite for negotiating an end to the 1852-53 Batswana-Boer War. During the same period Sebele and several of his siblings had been sent to the London Missionary Society station at Kuruman/Kudumane to be educated under the care of the Rev. John Moffat. Bogwera is traditional Setswana initiation.

SCENE 3

(Kgotla at Molepolole, Sechele, Sebele, Kgari, Kgosidintsi, Warren and Mackenzie w/extras. Bakwena sit in a semi-circle facing Sechele, with Warren and Mackenzie, by his side.)

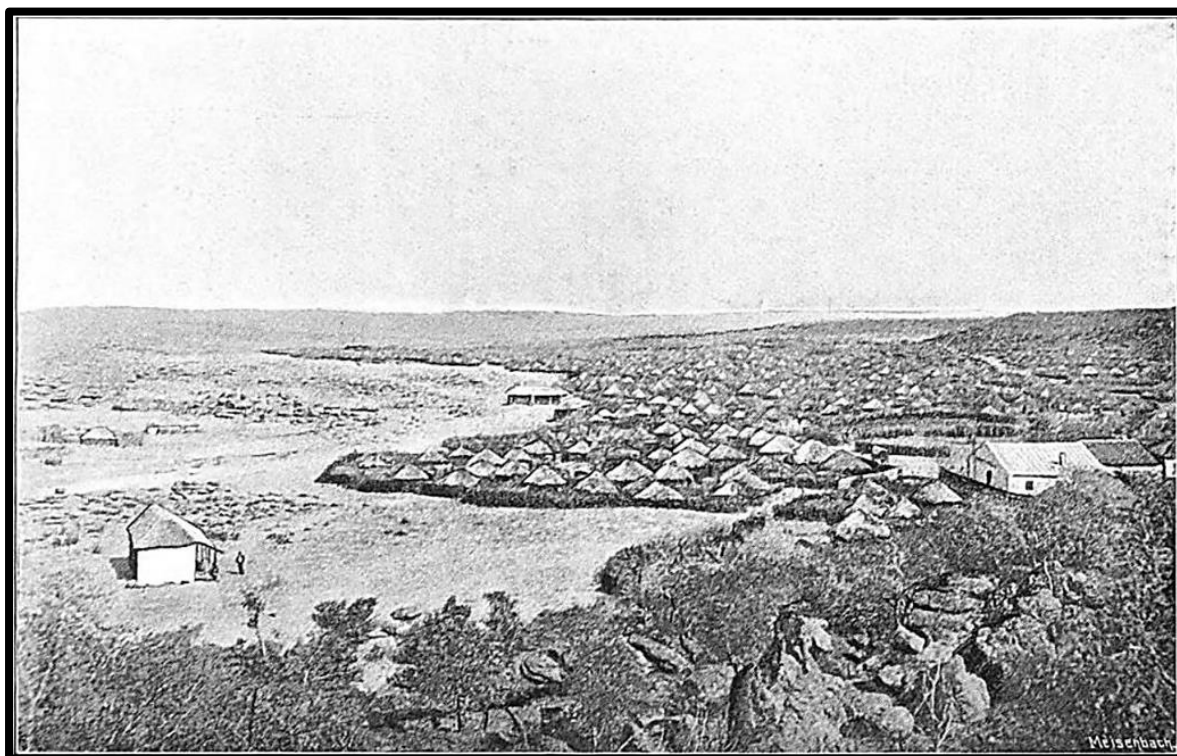


Fig. 6: Molepolole in April 1885, photo taken by taken by Lieutenant Haynes of the Bechuanaland Field Force.

Warren – I have been sent by the Queen's Government to give you the following notice. The Queen's Government has established a Protectorate over the part of Bechuanaland and Kalahari west of the Transvaal, north of the Cape Colony and westwards toward Namaqualand.

(Pause, whispering among the Bakwena)

Sechele – Has the Kgosi nothing more to tell us?

Warren – No.

Sebele- What in us has brought this on, that the country should be taken from us? (Cool but on a short fuse)

Warren- Does Sebele know what it means by the country being taken?

Sebele- Seeing what I now know, the boundary line running northwards about Tati and round west in the Kgalagadi takes us all in, therefore it is that I ask, what in us has brought this on?

Warren- But does Sebele know what being taken means?

Sebele- I have been told, and I have seen in the papers, that our country is taken, and we, the Bakwena, were never consulted; therefore, I ask why it has been taken?

Warren- I said that a Protectorate had been established, I did not say the country had been taken. (Matter of fact tone)

Sebele- What is the Protectorate for?

Warren- Does Sebele consider his tribe requires no protection?

Sebele- What is meant by protection?

Warren- The protection may mean protection from the inside or protection from the outside. (Patronising)

Sebele- When a man takes a shield and holds it up, he holds it against something; what is it that we are to be protected against?

Warren- Is there nothing you want protection against?

Sebele- You may see it, but we the Bakwena do not see it yet.
(Scornful)

Warren- Does Sebele know what has just taken place down to the south in the Barolong country? [Montshioa's]

Sebele- We, the Bakwena, are not Barolong. (Murmurs of agreement among the extras)

Warren- What does Sebele mean?

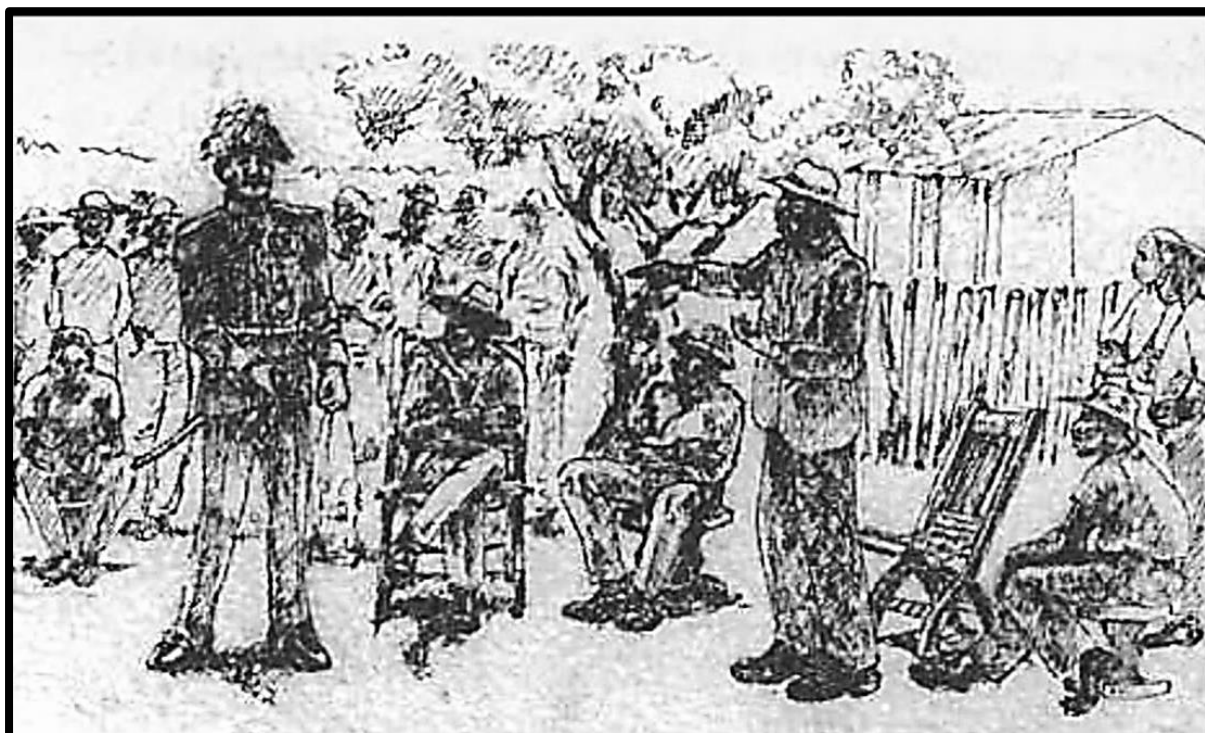


Fig. 7: "Warren at Molepolole kgotla" from Ramsay, J., Morton, B. & Mgadla, T. *Building a Nation, A History of Botswana 1800-1910* (1996)

Sebele- A stem-buck [Steenbok] cannot protect itself, but God protects it and lets it live. (Murmurs of agreement among the extras)

Warren- Was it the same with you when you came here as refugees fleeing from the Boers? (Smug and sceptical)

Sebele- A stem-buck gets into difficulties, but when it does so it must get out of them, and God helps it to do so. (Murmurs of agreement)

Warren- Then does Sebele wish me to tell the Queen that the Bakwena are strong enough to protect themselves? (Dismissive and strong)

Sebele- We do not want any protection; we are strong enough to protect ourselves." (Extras in response, undulations and chants of Pula! Pula!)

Warren – Supposing we leave here today and tomorrow, the Bakwena cattle are all swept away, what then?

Sebele - I have spoken for myself. There are other Bakwena who will now speak, but for myself, I want no English protection.

Kgosidintsi - You come news, which is familiar to our ears. You say we were attacked by the Boers. They did attack us thirty years ago when Livingstone was here. Livingstone warned us of the Boer plans and told us to get guns to defend ourselves. After the attack, my elder brother said we should seek help from Livingstone's Queen. He tried to see the Queen and only got as far as Cape Town, but he was treated kindly there. Therefore, we lived on, and by and by Livingstone went along up country, leaving us and my brother. Sechele said he was in favour of being friendly with the English, and letting them teach his people. But the Boers had chased Livingstone away and so, instead, German missionaries came from the Transvaal. Later, an English missionary returned and I convinced my brother to send the Germans away. I say that all along we have depended on the English! And when we had a problem with the Bakgatla of Linchwe, another Englishman, Melville, came and he also helped us. From these events, I say that Sechele became an Englishman. If you were beginning a new thing, my heart would be afraid, but if you talk of protection, inasmuch as that is what we have been long waiting for, from the time we were attacked by the Boers, I, a Mokwena, say, Yes, that is what we have always wanted. I hear nothing you have said today to make my heart sore. I hear merely the words, which we asked for in the olden times. I have no more to say, but that I feel assured I am an Englishman.

(Some commotion between Bakwena supporting Sebele's and Kgosidintsi's positions; Sechele raise his sceptre, a fire poker, shouts of Mokwena, before the kgotla falls in silence)

Sechele – I will speak now. Kgosi Warren, I do not know the exact object of your coming here. When we see you appear here, we do not know if it will be life or death to us, but that we know it will be death to us if you do to us as the Boers do to our Bahurutse cousins. We shall be dead men if you do to us as the Boers did to the Bakgatla at Rustenburg. If you talk merely in parables, we shall not understand you easily. I have seen a newspaper in which it is said I along with Gaseitsiwe and Khama asked for protection. I do not understand about this asking! Years ago, the Bakwena were collected together as they are now when I went to Cape Town to get guns and powder to defend myself with. I went with Sanwe, Mr. Sam Edwards, here. There are others who can testify if I ever asked for anything besides to be allowed to buy guns and powder; to be allowed to obtain weapons the same as

what the Boers had, to defend myself against them. As to our friendship, I do not know why, because of that our country should be taken possession of. Why is known only to you white people and the missionary who lives here. I do not wish the Bakwena to become your vassals paying tribute like the Batswana in the Transvaal. I wish us to be friends and allies. When the missionary [Rodger Price] went away, I said to him "will you leave us now we are menaced by the Transvaal?" Tell your people that they must let me have weapons to defend myself with.

Warren – Whom does Sechele want to get guns from, the Queen, or the Cape Colony, or whom? (Exasperated)

Sechele – When I went to Cape Town I asked the Cape Government for these weapons; now I ask you.

Sebele – What my father means is that the trade in guns and ammunition should be a free trade. Let it not be shut up, but be a free trade.

Warren - But by whom is it shut up?

Sebele - Give us free trade in guns and ammunition and we will protect ourselves!

Warren - But who stops the trade?

Sebele - The Boers.

Warren - Which Boers?

Sebele - The Boers who seized Mafikeng from the Barolong have stopped the powder from coming up.

Warren - But the road is now open, who stops the powder from coming up?

Sebele - It hasn't come.

Warren - But is there anything to prevent it coming?

Sebele – I do not know.

Warren - Then what is it you want? You want the English to clear these Boers out of the country so that you can get arms and ammunition up free.

Sebele - Let the road be open as it used to be, the road has been kept open through my father's country.

Warren - Who is to keep the road open?

Sebele - Who used to keep it open?

Warren - You ought to no better than I.

Sebele - All I know is that the Boers stopped the trade.

Warren - In whose country was the trade stopped?

Sebele - In that of the Barolong.

Warren - Then was it the Barolong who kept the trade route open?

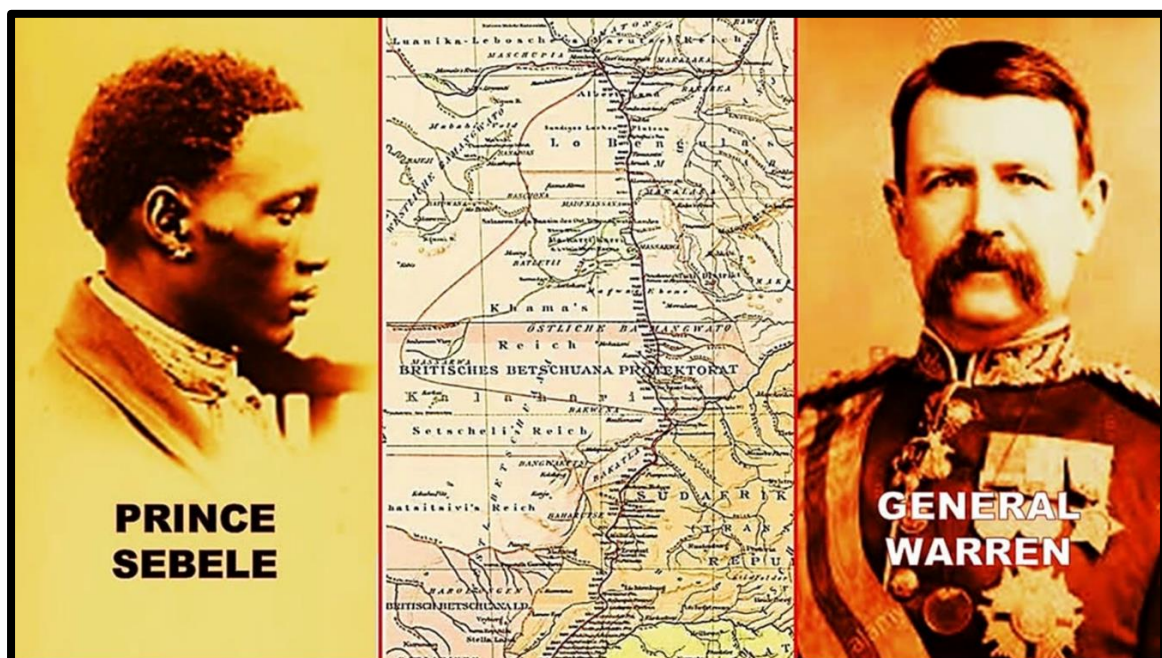


Fig 8: Sebele by Gustav Fritsch, 1865, Warren in Creswike, 1900.

Sebele – I do not know who kept the Barolong portion of the road open, what I do know is that we kept the Kweneng open by ourselves.

Warren - Sebele is going off the point what I want to know is who it was who kept the Barolong part of the road open.

Sebele - We are talking nonsense to no effect.

Warren – Why?

Sebele - Because when we heard you had come at first, we heard that you had to do with the Boers. Now you have come here, if you have anything to tell us let us hear it!

Warren - But we were on an important point just now, namely that the natives were unable to keep the road open when the Boers chose to stop it.

Sebele - The stem-buck gets a chance of living somehow!

(More energetic talking among Bakwena)

Kgari - I think it would be a good plan for us to meet together and talk things over. Kgosidintsi has put things in a new light to me. We have all along been going towards protection, but if there is to be a paying of taxes, then that is another thing.

Headman - I think Kgosidintsi has spoken well (He is silenced by Sechele)

Warren - (Addressing the people) If you can imagine me putting myself in your shoes, I should say Sebele says too much. He is quite right to be cautious, and to know where he is going before he goes in for a thing, but he is going too far when he says you want no protection. That is nonsense. Look at the tribes all around being taken by the Boers; do you think you will escape without assistance?

Sechele - We have all got our own words and our own way of speaking. My words have faithfully been spoken by my brother Kgosidintsi and my son. I don't know what you are accustomed to, but we always say what is on our minds. (Speaking forcefully)

Warren - Yes, we are also accustomed to free speaking, but Sebele stops others from saying their words? The question before you is this: If we now give you protection or friendship or whatever you wish to call it, what are you going to give in return? There are twenty or thirty different kinds of authority exercised by the Queen over her subjects. In some cases, the natives their own laws concurrently with the exercise of law by the Central Government, in others, native laws exist almost alone without interference. What I want to get from you is what you think is best for the Bakwena.

(At this point various headmen rise and call for the Bakwena to meet among themselves, the kgotla meeting breaks up.)

Sebele - (As others are leaving the kgotla, speaking to the audience) my brother Kgari thinks that Kgosidintsi and the English will come to his aid someday. He is a fool for I know both parties better than he!



Fig. 9: Ntsweng, Molepolole centre, 1865 photo by Gustav Fritsch.

SCENE 4

Sweeper 1 - Monna, where is that Boer, Pik the waggon maker, my uncle has a wheel that needs fixing.

Sweeper 2 - *Ga ke itse*, I suppose that is what the English mean by protection: as soon as the soldiers came, Pik went east!

Sweeper 1 - I've heard he's not a Boer at all. When he was drunk, he said that his grandmother was one of us.

Sweeper 2 - A real Boer never knows who his grandparents are anyway. Like all Boers, he's very stupid. He asked me last week where I got these good shoes. I told him they were *kwen*a (crocodile), shoes. "How do I catch the crocodile?" he said. I told him that it was best at night. Go out in a boat and shine a torch onto the water. When a crocodile comes up, shoot it between the eyes. Pik tried this the next day. He shot the crocodile and dragged it to shore. He told me he turned it over and cursed that the one he shot wasn't wearing any shoes!

Sweeper 1 - What, do you call a Boer with half a brain?

Sweeper 2 - A genius.

Sweeper 1 - And what do you call a *Lekgoa* with half a brain?

Sweeper 2 - General Warren.

Sweeper 1 - The missionary Mackenzie is different. In one of his sermons, he told a story about a Mokwena who went to a *Maburu* church and was beaten to death. When he got to heaven, he complained to Jesus Christ, who told him, "We are both in the same tent; I've been trying to get into *Maburu* churches for hundreds of years."

Sweeper 2 - Here they come again. The Big men. They are the ones who talk about protection, but it is we, little folks who really need it.

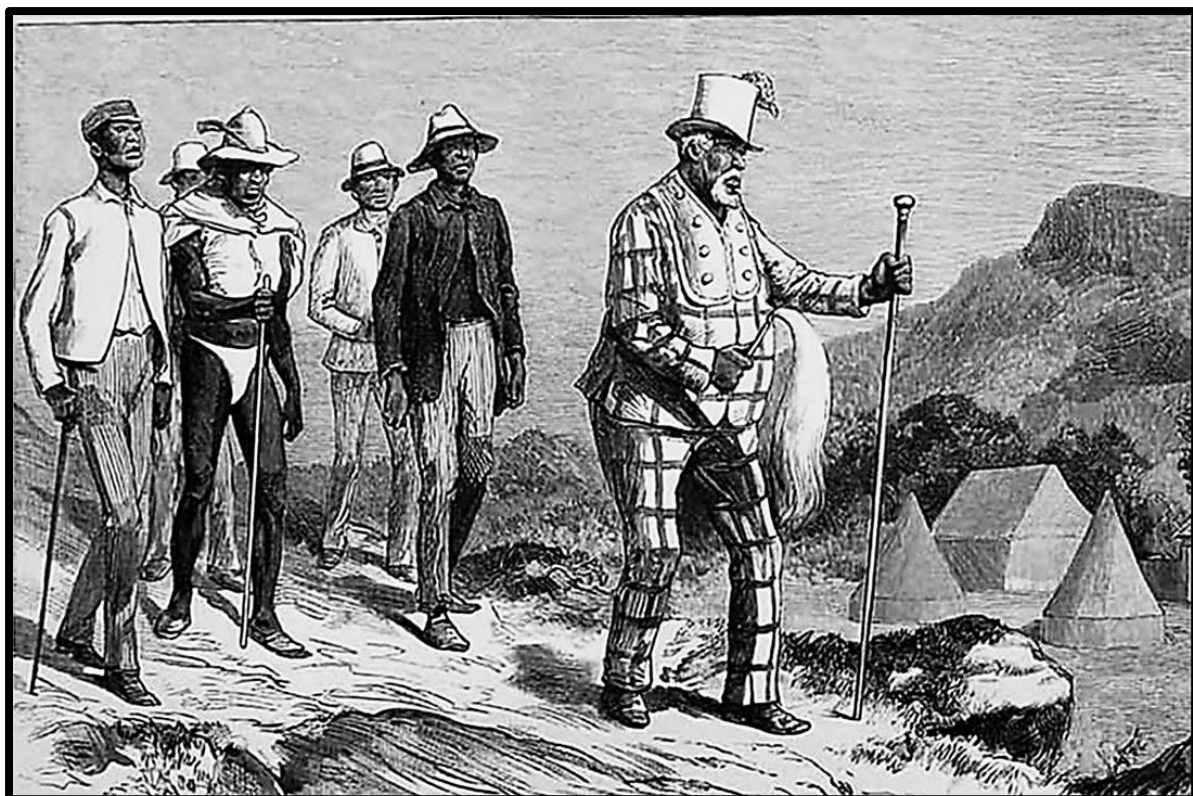


Fig. 10: "Sechele. Chief of the Bechuanas comes to pay his respects to the General" *The Graphic*, July 25, 1885.

(The meeting with all present resumes in the kgotla; Sechele addresses Warren)

Sechele - We have come down to tell you of our decision. Look at the old friendship that has existed between us and say why have you doubt about us. What is the meaning on your side of this protectorate you have established? It seems to me you doubt my friendship, but I have been with the English ever since I went to Cape Town. If I belong to the Queen, why do you not trust me? That is what I have to say. I have to say I also ask you in what way this Protectorate gives us protection?

Warren - I have never shown any doubt about your friendship.
(Wounded)

Sechele - What can we have been talking about so long if there is no doubt?

Warren - I have no doubt, it must be on your side.

Sechele - I will speak then. We heard rumours of the arrival of you, Kgosi Warren. That you had come to deal with the troubles caused by the Boers throughout the countries of the Barolong and Batlhaping. Later we heard that our neighbour Gaseitsiwe had appealed to you. Then I received a message that you were coming here to speak to me. When I was told that my country was protected I was pleased and gathered my people together to meet you. Now we have listened to you, talked among ourselves and reached a decision. The Bakwena nation has come to the decision that we will make up our minds as to the value of the protectorate by the manner in which the Barolong, Batlhaping and Bangwaketse troubles with the Boers are settled. Today I am glad on account of what you have told us, but it is an expression made in the dark and in uncertainty, as at childbirth, when one cannot tell whether a girl or a boy is born. The result will lie in the treatment by the Queen of the Barolong, Batlhaping and Bangwaketse. We are with you, but at the same time, we would like to see how you work out your principles with reference to the sufferings down south. I have nothing further to say, but I am glad at the words you have spoken but look to see how you deal with the matters at hand.

Warren - I tell the Chief we are accustomed to speak plainly in our country and I am sure that the Queen will be pleased to hear that he has spoken out, and it is right that he should say what he thinks. The general difficulty in these matters is that people do not speak their minds and say what they have to say. I think that what he has said will appeal to every Englishman.

Sechele - It is good that we are both of one mind in our talk. But now to deeds. When the Barolong, Batlhaping, and Bangwaketse are resuscitated, then we shall see the results of a Protectorate and there will not be one dissentient voice raised against it in the whole nation. I have some dealings with the Boers, buying and selling mealies, dogs and cattle; but I have only one people. I wish to be allies with, and they are the English.

Warren - When speaking of the English does the Chief mean the Queen or the Cape Government?

Sechele - I look upon you as from England. When I went to the Cape, they refused to do anything for me.

Warren - Does the Chief know Mr. Upington the Cape Prime Minister?

Sechele - Yes, I know who you mean. He sent me a letter and a drinking cup. I wrote him but I did not mean to address his government, but the Queen's.

Warren - Does the Chief look upon Mr. Upington as representing the Queen?

Sechele - No. When I speak of the Queen's Government, I don't mean the colonial government, but I mean the Queen of England's government.

Warren - Then am I to understand that the Chief does not wish to be under the Colonial Government.

Sechele - We know nothing about the Cape, we only know about the Queen's Government.

Sebele - In our nation, we have only one government. If I say something and it is not obeyed, it is as if by father had spoken it.

Warren - The Chief must realise that the Cape Colony governs itself, the Queen only sends a Governor out to supervise. (Bakwena talk about government among themselves)

Sebele - In the meanwhile, until these outstanding matters, the affairs of the Barolong, Batlhaping and Bangwaketse are settled we stand outside the protectorate.

Warren - Do the people know the proverb we have "prevention is better than cure?"

Sechele - The short and long of it we would say to you go, do the work we heard that you had come to do, take care of the problems you left behind you down south. Now that the Queen has taken the step to establish the Protectorate and you come here, I have nothing to see but words for this Protectorate, not deeds. You left the great matter behind you apparently untouched and came up to me with protection, I have no particular grievance to be rectified.

Warren - The Chief must know that the Batlhaping country went wrong before the Protectorate. Their Chief gave his land away.

Sechele - Take the Batlhaping out of the question. The others have suffered enough. My neighbour Gaseitsiwe's losses are great. I don't know how great but you do. Wipe away the tears from his eyes first and then I shall be willing to come under you. I have spoken and await an answer.

Warren – I have no answer to give you. I shall send your words to the Queen.

Sechele - I wish to say that I have always been in favour of the English government, but you come prematurely. Go back and do the work you have at hand, then we shall see the benefit of a Protectorate.

Warren - The Chief has spoken well.

Sechele - What do you think will happen now?

Warren - I cannot tell. Can I look into the future? But, suppose a Boer commando comes down tomorrow and sweeps away your cattle, what then?

Sechele - Have you got a commando ready that you say this? Is there one close to this town to play off against me after you go away? In any case, are we not in the same tent? Am I not within the boundaries of the Protectorate? I know it is established, but as to the numerous questions springing out of it, I wish to leave them all until we see how you carry out your protection.

EPILOGUE

Yes that is the end of the play. You are right to think that this is a vague and inconclusive ending, yet the nature of the Protectorate was, in the words of Sechele, "an expression made in the dark and in uncertainty, as at childbirth, when one cannot tell whether a girl or boy is to be born". Even today, we still debate the nature and character of the Protectorate. Some of this debate will be carried on in the coming weeks, every Tuesday evening. Please come along.

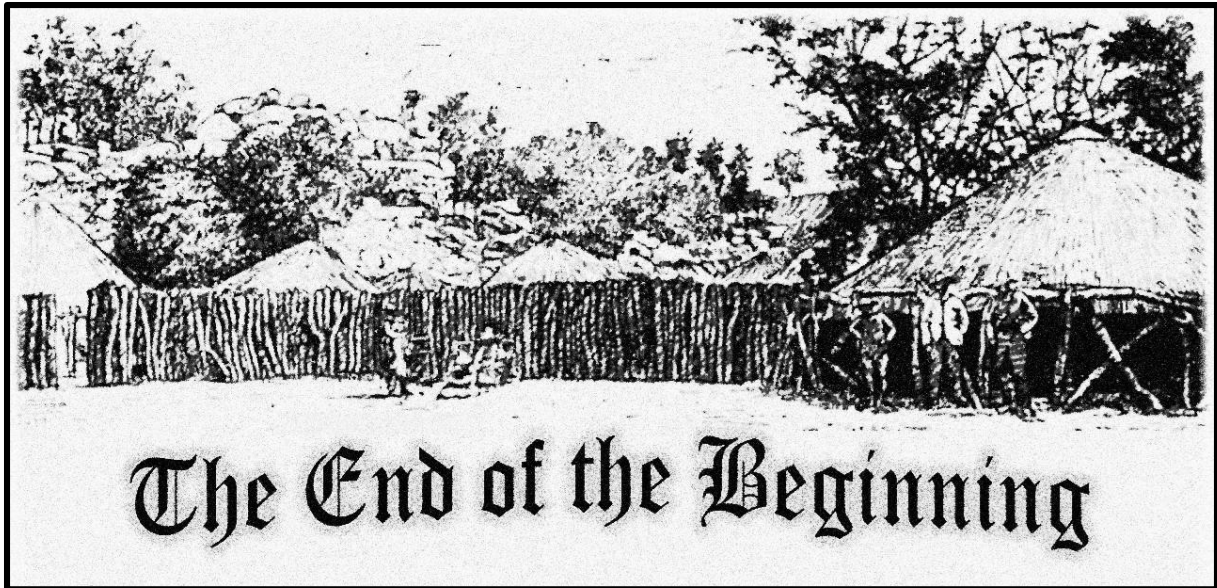


Fig. 11: Sechele's courtyard, from photo engraving, *The Chronicle*, L.M.S., August 1887.

III - "SIR CHARLES WARREN AT SECHELE'S" PUBLISHED IN THE DIAMOND FIELDS TIMES, TUESDAY, MAY 12, 1885 AND REPRODUCED IN PRO CO 879/24/317

The Right Hon. Sir HERCULES ROBINSON, G.C.M.G., to the Right Hon. the EARL OF DERBY, K.G. (Received June 18, 1885.)

(No. 176,) Government House, Cape Town, May 20, 1885
My Lord.

I have the honour to enclose, for your information, a cutting from the *Diamond Fields Times*, purporting to give a report of the meeting between Sir Charles Warren and Sechele, the Chief of the Bakwena.

2. The general remarks of the correspondent in the concluding portion of his letter have evidently been based on misleading information, but it is probable that his account of the interview itself, at which he appears to have been present, is fairly correct.

3. The position taken up by the Chief and his sons seems to have been far from encouraging. They appeared to consider that they would be conferring a favour upon Her Majesty's Government if they were to acquiesce in the establishment of a British Protectorate, and expressed themselves unwilling to contribute towards the cost of their protection.

I have, &c.

(Signed) HERCULES ROBINSON, High Commissioner
The Right Hon. the Earl of Derby, K.G, &c, &c., &c.

Enclosure No. 5. The "Diamond Fields Times," Tuesday, May 12.

"Sir Charles Warren at Sechele's (From our own Correspondent)

[Sir George Baden Powell, who was serving as General Warren's Private Secretary authored the report]¹³

Report of the Meeting between the Special Commissioner, Sir Charles Warren, and the Chief Sechele, assembled with his Councillors at Molepolole, April 27, 1885

General Warren arrived here early on the 26th and paid a visit of etiquette to the Chief Sechele, at which the Special Commissioner said he had come with a message from the Queen, and that he would like to meet Sechele and his councillors, and hear their opinions about the Protectorate declared by Her Gracious Majesty the Queen. It was arranged accordingly that there should be a meeting this morning. About nine o'clock a messenger arrived to tell the General that Sechele and his people were ready to hear him. Sir Charles Warren accordingly went up with his personal staff, and found Sechele with his sons seated opposite him, and surrounded by about 300 of his people. Chairs were placed for the General's party; Mr. Mackenzie sitting next to the Chief to act as interpreter, aided by Major S. Edwards.

General Warren opened the proceedings by rising and. saying, "I have been desired by the Queen's Government to give you the following information. The Queen has declared a Protectorate over Bechuanaland and the Kalahari, west of the South African Republic, north of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, westward towards Namaqualand, and northwards by the boundaries of the Matabele country."

This Mr. Mackenzie explained to the Chief and said the Special Commissioner wanted to hear his (Sechele's) opinion on it.

¹³ Identity of the correspondent is confirmed in *The Colonies and India*, July 10, 1885, p. 11. Sir George Smyth Baden-Powell, KCMG (1847-1898) was the older brother of Lord Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell (1857-1941), the Boer war General and founder of the Boy Scouts.

(Sebele.) Why is our country to be taken from us?

(General.) What does Sechele understand by his country being taken under protection?

(Sebele, the chief's eldest son.) I say it has been taken, because we have never been asked.

(General.) I read out a Protectorate had been established.

(Sebele) What are we protected from? What is the matter?

(General.) Do you think you require no protection?

(Sebele.) What do you mean by protection?

(General.) Protection may mean protecting from outside, and at the same time guarding from inside.

(Sebele.) A man, when he takes his shield, holds it up against something, - a buffalo or what not.

(General.) Is there, then nothing you want guarding against?

(Sebele.) It may be known to you, Sir; we don't know it.

(General.) Do you know what has taken place down south of you?

(Sebele.) We are not Barolongs, we are Bakwenas; the stembok cannot protect itself, but God looks after it.

(General.) Was this the case before you came up here from the Transvaal?

(Sebele.). The stembok [steenbok] gets into difficulties. But it gets out.

(General.) Does he wish me to tell the Queen he wants no protection; he can protect himself?

(Sebele.) He does not want protection; he wants only friendship.

(General.) Suppose we go to-day, and all your cattle are swept away; what then?

(Sebele.). There are other Bakwena to speak; all I say is that for *my own part* I want no protection!

Khosi Lintsei [Kgosidintsi] the Chief's brother, a man of much authority, then spoke. He said, you have brought news, but news with which we are familiar. We have been attacked by the Boers; we were when Dr Livingstone was with us. I said to the Doctor, "Go and find out why they attack us." After the war my brother, the Chief, said to me, " Khosi Lintse, I see no good in the black people. I have no confidence in them." I shall make known my case to the Queen. You must remain in charge of the "town." He went with Sanwe (Sam Edwards). He went to the Cape, and he said, "That there he could not find an opening, that is, an opportunity of approaching the Queen." (I may here remark that the Chief said yesterday that the Cape authorities slighted him, and would not let him have guns or ammunition, while, when he visited Pretorius afterwards, he made him a present of powder and lead.) The people were kind and helped me with money. The ivory, which was plentiful here in those days, I shall reward those who were kind to me with. So we lived on. Dr Livingstone left us to live with tribes on in front. We were fond of being taught by the English, but the Boers caused the missionaries to go from us.

Sechele said I had better find a missionary who will come here. We heard of a German missionary. At that time, a writing came from Moffitt saying, "How about the garden I was working in amongst you? And we believed in all he said. The German can go and the Englishman, can come, and the Germans left and an Englishman came. I speak on the side of Sechele, not on the side of Sebele. We were always dependent on the English. I am a Bakwena, and yet I did not know of any boundary line to our country until Sechele said he wanted to set the boundary line right. Sechele, sent to the Transvaal people at Zeerust, and Melville came, and Sechele said to him, "Let my country be known, and be separated from that belonging to the Boers." Melville went back and letters came from Pretoria. A letter came too from Shepstone, saying Lenchi [Lentswe] had written, saying he was being killed by Sechele about the country. (The facts are the Chief Lenchi fled from the Transvaal, and settled in Secheli's country, and at this settlement of

boundary, Sechele said to Lenchi, "Pay me tribute, however small, or the country you occupy will be claimed by the Boer."

[Kgosidintsi] This Lenchi refused, and said the country belonged to white men, and wrote to Shepstone, whereupon Sechele made war upon him.) Sechele answered this letter, saying, If Lenchi isn't in our country, let Melville come and clear it up. Melville came and said, "I have now come to settle the boundary line." I was ordered, with his son to go with him, when Melville said, "The English say you had better widen your boundary line to the West. If you do so a boundary line will "be put down which will not be interfered with." Sechele agreed, and a boundary line was fixed down the Marico River to Sekwani on that river. I therefore saw Sechele to be English by that. First, he went to the Cape to say the black man was no good. Then, by widening the boundary to suit the English, by this I say Sechele was English. Now you speak about a wider boundary (i.e., the Protectorate). I find myself inside it! As I always was. If you were bringing a new thing, Sir, then my heart would be afraid. If you speak about protection the same as before, when we were attacked by the Boers, then that is what we always wanted. I hear nothing to-day that makes my heart sore. I hear only words of olden times. I have finished.

(General.) What does he mean when he speaks about protection from the Boers?

(Khosi Lintsei.) I mean the Boers under Paul Kruger and Scholtz.

(General.) Do you mean the Transvaal Government?

(Khosi Lintsei.) I did not know there was a Government in those days. We only sent to the Transvaal when ivory was plentiful, to sell it and to buy, and sell cattle. When Hendrik Potgieter came to buy ivory we were told he was chief of the Boers.

At this juncture, the General offered the Chief a cigarette, which gave him a violent fit of choking, and drew some "chaff" from his son, and much pleasantries from his people.

Khosi Lintsie ended by saying, "As far as friendship is concerned, I am English."

(General.) Daring the disturbances in the South caused by Nicholas Gey, did they have any communication with these people? I want to know whom they want protection against?

Sechele then spoke saying he did not understand the objects of this journey. Does it mean life or death to us? What we know as death would be, if you do to us as the Boers did to Mokhatla in the Rustenberg district. If you speak in parables, you will stop our ears. I showed you a newspaper in which it said I, Gaseitsiwe, and Khama had asked for protection. I don't understand what this means. The Bakwenas were collected as they are now when I told them I was going to the Cape to get powder and lead to fight the Boers. Sanwe [Sam Edwards] was with me. There are some who can say if I asked for anything else. As to friendship, or taking possession of me; that can only be known to the white people, and my missionary living here. I mean I do not want to become your vassal and pay tribute as Mokhalla in the Transvaal, but I want in case of war to call on you for help. When Mr. Price (present missionary) went away, I said you leave me in danger of the Transvaal. Tell your people on in front that they must let me buy weapons of defence.

(General.) Who does he mean by wanting to get weapons from?

(Sechele.) Long ago, I asked these things from the Cape, but to-day I ask them from you, Sir. I want the gun trade to be open. Let the path of defence be open.

(General.) By whom is it shut up? .

(Sechele. [Sic. actually Sebele]) By the Boers. . . .

(General.) What Boers?

(Sechele [Sebele].) By Gey's Boers.

(General.) The road is now open. Can you get weapons now? What is it they want? To clear out Nicholas Gey from Montsioa's country that they may get powder?

(Sechele [Sebele].) Just let the paths be open through the country for white men.

(General.) Who is to keep them open? ·

(Sechele [Sebele].) Who were they kept open by before?

(General.) You know better than I. ·

(Sebele.) If you don't know, I don't. All I do know is Gey has stopped them in the Barolong country.

(Sechele.) We are talking nonsense, and to what effect? Why have you come to me? When you were a long way off, we heard you were come to speak to the Boers. But why have you left the Boers to come to us?

Sechele's younger son Kgare [Kgari] said: He considered there was occasion to meet together. He thought all along that they were in the way of being protected. Protection he agreed to, but tribute is another thing.

(General.) What are they going to do in return? If the Queen is attacked, will they come and help her? It is a one-sided affair you want.

Another speaker said he quite agreed with what the Chief's brother said, but they should be careful.

(General.) I quite agree that you should be cautious and ascertain that you get proper protection; but it is absolute nonsense, however, for Sechele [Sebele] to say that they want no protection, and talk that nonsense about the stembok.

(Sechele.) We all have our ways of speaking, but I assure you my wishes have been spoken by my brother and by my younger son and not by Sebele. I don't know if you in your country are used to free assemblies.

(General.) Yes, I am, but he (i.e. Sebele) has stopped everyone when they wished to speak. I want to hear the people's as well as the chiefs' opinions. They all want something, friendship or protection; I want to know what they are going to give in turn. There are 20 or 30 different kinds of protection over the Queen's subjects in the various parts of her Empire. Some are directly under the Queen, others have their own

forms of Government subject to the will of the Queen, The question before us to-day is, what do these people want?

Another speaker proposed that they might separate and consult. Another speaker thought that they were divided in opinion, and they want to separate and consult.

Mr. Mackenzie said, as an old friend of the Chief and his tribe, that it well they should give it due consideration. They would long remember this day, and he hoped they would not be sorry at any rash conclusions arrived at. He then explained the map of their country to them. The Chief concluded by saying they would take the whole matter under their consideration, and would let the General know their decision. The meeting then broke up. A photograph of the assembly was taken during the time the discussion was going on. **[Photo by Lt. Haynes, Fig. 2]**

The Chief with his sons and headmen came down to the General's tents in the afternoon; and after refreshments said:-

(Sechele.) I have come down to speak to you about the old friendship existing formerly between us, and to show there no doubt about it now. It seems to me you now doubt my friendship, which has existed since I went down to the Cape. Why do you doubt me?

(General.) In what way have I shown any doubt?

(Sechele.) How can we have had such a long talk unless you have doubt?

(General.) The doubt is all on your side.

(Sechele.) We heard rumours that you have enquired into the Chiefs' wrongs down South. We heard you made enquiries into Bethell's death. You came as far as Montsioa's. We heard Gaseitsiwe had gone to you to make known what the Boers had done in his country. Then I heard Mr. Sam Edwards was to be sent to me to tell me what was to be done with the destroyers of these people. As soon as the Chief (General Warren) came, I hear the boundary line is to be carried on. We are very glad to hear all this. Now I have come to fulfil what I told you when I asked to be left to make up our minds. The Bakwenas have come to the decision that they will make up their minds as to the protectorate when they hear how Mankoroane, Montsioa, and Gaseitswe have been

treated; when they learn what satisfaction those Chiefs get for the wrongs they have suffered. To-day, I say, they are glad as to the boundary line (i.e., protectorate), but it is like a thing in the dark. It is like a woman in child, when she speculates is it a boy, or is it a girl? We can't tell what your protectorate may mean. We are English; we are one with you. But we should like to see how you bring your views in with us with regard to those three Chiefs and this Englishman. I have spoken. I have nothing further to say; only that I wish to see if these Chiefs are to be raised from the dead again.

(General.) I am accustomed to speak plainly. I am sure the Queen will be glad to hear you have all spoken out your minds in this matter. The great difficulty in these matters is generally people don't know their own minds; or don't know what to say. I think, however, that what the Chief Sechele has said will appeal to every Englishman.

(Sechele,) It is right we have agreed in words, but now as to action! We want to see what you will do with regard to resuscitating these Chiefs. There won't then be a voice raised among any tribes against your protection. I have dealings with the Boers, but only mercantile, for cattle, &c. I only want to make friends with one people – the English.

(General.) I want to know that you understand to what Government you apply.

(Sechele.) I regard you as from England. You represent England. I went once to the Cape, and they did nothing for me.

(General.) You know Mr. Upington was at Rooi Grond, and that he went to see the Chief Gaseitsiwe.

(Sechele.) I know who you mean. He gave me a cup, and I wrote a letter to him. I don't mean him; I mean the Queen's Government.

(General.) Don't you consider, then that he represents the Queen's Government?

(Sechele.) I did not consider he came from the Queen's Government; whenever I speak, I mean the Queen's Government in London.

(Sebele here said:) We don't know the Cape Government; we are accustomed to one chief.

(General.) Do they understand that there is a difference between coming under the Cape and Coming under the Home Government?

(Sechele.) We stand outside until we see what you will do down below.

(General.) In our language, we have a proverb, "Prevention is better than cure."

(Sechele.) The short and the long of the matter is that we believed you came up the country to set things right for Mankoroane, a black man like me; for Montsioa, a black man like me; for Gaseitsiwe, a black man like me; and for the people of the Englishman.

(General.) What does he mean by talking like this? Here is a letter he wrote last March to me, complaining of the robbery of his carts by the Boers.

The Chief, with evident cunning, threw doubts on the authenticity of the letter. The General then showed a letter written through Mr. Price to Thomas Upington, in answer by Sechele, dated December 15th, acknowledging the receipt of Mr. Upington's of November 21st, sent him with a silver cup from Rooi Grond on that date.

(Sechele.) Yes, that letter was written by me. But I don't want to be under the Government represented by that man. I want to be under the Queen in London; but I want to understand what that protection will be, and to wait until I see what has been done for the other Chiefs you have passed by. I want to see if you eat them up again.

(General.) The affairs of one of these Chiefs went wrong before any protectorate was declared. How are we, therefore, to redress them? Maokoroane gave away his lands before he was protected. . . .

(Sechele.) I still stand by the letter written; but wipe away the tears from the eyes of Montsioa and Gaseitsiwe, reinstate them in their rights, we will pass by Mankoroane. We know their heavy losses, and the number of them; let us see what redress they get. If they are comforted, we will accept your message. Before I go, I wish to say I have always considered myself under the English. But you come

prematurely to me. Go and do your duty down South to those you declare to protect.

(He then stopped, and asked if General Warren did not agree with him.)

(General.) The Chief has spoken well. I cannot look into the future. But suppose we left, and a Boer commando came and attacked you?

(Sechele.) Would they come now while we are here in this tent; would they come while you are with me? Are we not at one? Or have you a commando ready to attack me if I refuse to come under your protectorate?

(This last speech was. spoken rather ironically.)

The Chief then said he had spoken his whole mind, and shook hands, and returned with his sons and people up to his town.

[NB: The article continues with a description of an earlier discussion, held on the Saturday, the 25th of April, between Major Sam Edwards, joined by Sir George Baden-Powell, and Sechele and his sons at Sechele's house. This is two days prior to Warren's April 27, 1885, formal meeting with the Bakwena]

We arrived at Molopolole, the town of Sechele, chief of the Bakwena tribe, on Saturday morning at daybreak. The chief part of the town is situated at the head of a kloof, on a very rocky mountain, the waggon road of which is on the north side. The side is precipitous, whilst the south side is reached by a very rocky path up the kloof leading to the Chief's house. The west side is also very steep and covered by another range of steep and rocky hills. The Molopolole River, when it is flowing, runs down the gorge between this range, and passes out at a poort between the hills to the south of the town.¹⁴ Water is obtained from the Molopolole at this season of the year only by sinking pits in its bed.

There are several hundred huts situated at the foot of the south side of the range, and in the small valley which opens out beyond the south poort, and closes again towards a poort on the east side, through the road which from Kanje [Kanye] goes along the Notuani river to Shoshong. In this

¹⁴ In South African English a poort is a narrow pass through hills or mountains.

valley stands the mission station and the church, and conspicuous at the entrance to the valley are the ruins of a huge building, formerly a store, kept by Taylor and Wilmore. The town would be a very difficult one to attack, but could be easily reduced by cutting off its water supply.

I went up to the upper town with Major Edwardes to pay the old Chief a visit, and to acquaint him with the near approach of General Warren.

The Chiefs son, Sebele, met us, and conducted us to his father, whom we found sitting with some of his headmen in a courtyard in front of his house. The old man was most gorgeously attired in a blue velvet robe, edged with white, with the arms of England resplendent on his back. After greeting us, the old man conducted us to his house, which is a large white building, built by Europeans, and furnished in a highly civilized style. We were ushered into what was evidently the dining room, there being a large sideboard and table surrounded with comfortable chairs. The Chief sat on a couch at the head of the table, Major Edwards and myself on his left, and his two sons opposite us. Finer specimens of men it would be difficult to find than the old Chief and his sons. They are considerably over six feet high and broad in proportion. Sebele could give Montsioa a stone and beat him, for, though not so fat as the latter, he is bigger in frame.

After coffee and sweet biscuits had been brought in and handed round by a servant, the old Chief began by telling Major Edwardes that he knew he came from General Warren, and was quite aware of the objects of his mission. He said he already knew that the Queen had taken him and his country under her protection. Major Edwards then gave a letter from Mr. Mackenzie, which Sebele read over and then read aloud. Major Edwards then read the Queen's proclamation, and explained it to them, saying that it would be necessary to place some men in the country to protect it, and that they would have to help in that protection.

When the Chief was about to reply, his son stopped him; and told him not to commit himself to anything definite, that they must consult about it first. The son then asked his father for a mission paper printed at Kuruman, which, in the native language, gave the Queen's Proclamation, and stated that it was at the express wish of the Chiefs. This the son tried to make out was not the case, and wanted to know by whose authority it had been printed. The son is evidently very suspicious of the good intentions of the Cape Government. He fears that after waiting over forty years, and attending his father without having a voice in the distribution

of his country, expecting soon to step into his old fathers place, now he will lose his long expected honours, and be reduced to a poor Chief of Mankoroane'a calibre, whose power is a shadow, and whose country, or what is left of it, is a waste. When the son left the room for a minute or two, old Sechele said, "I have wanted the English all my life, and am glad if the Queen has "taken us under her protection. I like the English, but I don't want to be made a slave" of, like the native tribes who have come under the protection of the Dutch. Thirty years ago, I came all the way down to Cape Town, and asked, myself, to come under the English, and I was slighted. Then you would not have anything to do with me. Why do you now take me under your protection?

To this, Major Edwards said that was the fault of the Governor of the Cape in those days. Sechele then said, "God is above, and Queen Victoria overshadows the earth. "Whatever she says is done. If she says a line is to be drawn anywhere, it is drawn, "and no black man could stand against against her. I am English; I have always been English, but I can't say, like the Queen, a thing is to be done, and it is done. "I have to consult the wishes of my sons and my people."

Sebele is a man of considerable intelligence. He can read and write. He hears all that goes on down country. He reads a monthly magazine printed in his language at Kuruman; and his line of action, which is undoubtedly opposed to his father, is based on what he knows to have been the treatment of the Native Chiefs and tribes further south. He distrusts the Cape Government, and fears coming under their rule.

The tribe is going to be gathered to-morrow to hear what General Warren has to say. The General, who arrived here a few hours after our advanced party, paid a visit of etiquette to the old Chief. It was arranged that the General should meet Sechele, his sons; and chief counsellors, on Monday, for Sir Charles Warren to hear their views, and consult on the best method of making the protectorate a success. After the round unvarnished tale delivered in the foregoing report, it is scarcely necessary to add anything ; for those who have sufficient interest in South African politics to read it through, will form the opinion that must come from its perusal by loyal Englishmen, viz., that England's prestige has received another rude shock.

It must now be sadly apparent to us that even the black man no longer believes in our promises of protection. They have learned, by bitter

experience that we are ready with our words, but are loath to lavish our blows in support of them.

They have seen neighbouring tribes brutally used, robbed of their cattle, despoiled of their best lands, by constant inroads of marauders from a neighbouring state of white men, against whom they consider we were in honour bound to defend them. Who is to blame for this? Is it the general result of our weak policy in South Africa for the past four years? Or is it directly the fault of the Home Colonial Office for not ascertaining that English supremacy was dying from neglect? Or is it directly the fault of the Cape Government for the way in which they have placed into the hands of the oppressors of the blacks? Members of that Government visited Stellaland and Rooi Grond. If their national sympathies had not blinded them, they must have seen the iniquities that were being perpetrated against our allies.

As we came too late to save General Gordon, and protect his garrison, so now we are well-nigh too late in declaring this new protectorate. The Natives say we are premature; we must first redress the wrongs of Montsioa and Gaseitsiwe before they can believe in our protecting them! We should have protected Maokoroane, Montsioa, and Gaseitsiwe. We should have prevented the formation of a Stellaland Republic or a Rooi Grond Freebooters' State, by acting against the root of all-evil in South Africa. We should have gone to the source, and cut off the stream of Boer Marauders, who stole the cattle and eventually settled on many of the farms formally belonging to these Chiefs. The blacks even believe that we feared to tackle the Transvaal, and show that the State England must be supreme in South Africa, They tell us they thought we came to talk to the Boer, not them. They ask us why we don't obtain redress for those injured by the Boers? Whom have we to thank for all this? The Native Chiefs have answered it.

Gaseitsiwe won't accept protectorate if he is to come under the Cape Government; he says he distrusts them and their Boer sympathies. He does not want another Stellaland in his country. Sechele won't be protected if he is to come under the rule of the Government represented by Mr. Upington, even though he did send him a silver cup. Perhaps Rooi Grond was an unfortunate place for him to send it from, or to address a Native Chief from. Who have prevented the settlement of the Stellaland affairs, the bringing of Bethell's murderers to justice, and the just compensation of Montsioa? The chiefs Gaseitsiwe and Sechele have

formed their opinion. They read, or get read to them, the Cape papers, and have a monthly paper in their own language. An expedition better fitted out, or more adapted to the work intended for it, has never been assembled in South Africa than that commanded by General Warren, and no one knew this better than the Boers themselves. Why hasn't that force been used in the strong way originally intended by the Home Government? Why was not satisfaction demanded from that State which harbours beyond its frontier the men who have committed these cruel acts of tyranny against the Chiefs who have been our constant allies, until neighbouring Chiefs no longer believe in England's power to protect the black man?

Anyone who has read the Cape papers must have come to the conclusion that the Cape authorities have done all they can to thwart the just action of General Warren. Would that he had been given more liberty of action by the Home authorities. Would that the mysterious breaking of the cable twice, and for so long a time, at such a juncture, had not prevented people at home from judging the merits of the case.

Do the Cape Government think that these Chiefs will ever come under their rule, or that they will accept their protection, and the institution possibly of a hut tax? Such practical annexation would but produce another Kafir war, and make enemies of those who are willing enough to be the friends of the English. No. A different system must be pursued with regard to these Chiefs. If it were put into the hands of a man they could trust, who would teach them to organise their countries, and, with the aid of a few well-chosen men, gradually form them into useful allies, then, without the costs of annexation, we should reap all the advantages of it. Sechele is thoroughly English in all his sympathies. But his son is fearful that in trusting to English protection he will be reduced to the condition of the Native Chiefs in the Transvaal. He is highly intelligent; and is shrewd enough to distrust protection when he cannot see a single Chief in South Africa who has benefited by it.

Englishmen will admire his determined defence of his own rights. That he would like our protection, in the honest acceptation of the term, there can be no doubt. But now, like Macbeth, he is "Cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in to saucy doubts and fears."

P.S.-After closing my letter, and when the General was about to rectum down country, news was brought that Lobengula had gathered three

commandos and was going down to attack Khama; this coming from Sechele, who had just doubted the validity of our protection, coupled with the desire that the General would not leave him defenceless, as he heard a party of Boers was coming through his country, Sir Charles Warren at once decided to start with his small party (having with him here 10 officers and men) for Shoshong, Khama's capital. General Warren is thus showing in a practical way to those Chiefs that the Queen did not lately declare a protectorate over them without being prepared to fulfil her promise. Sir Charles Warren hopes by his presence and influence to prevent the outbreak of hostilities.

IV – POSTSCRIPT

General Warren's mission in Botswana continues

Following General Warren's April 27th meeting, its outcome was summarised by the Bakwena leadership in the following document:¹⁵

Molepolole, 28th April 1885

At a meeting of Bakwena with Sir Charles Warren, messenger of the Queen of England, he made known to us the pleasure of the Queen to establish a Protectorate in these lands, and showed us the boundaries of Protectorate; and our decision is to express our thanks for the Protectorate in which we are included. But we wish to see how the Queen's Protectorate will help the other Chiefs, which are included in it, namely, Mankoroane, Montsioa, and Ghasitsive. Should we find that they are well protected by the Queen, we shall then be agreeable and without a word of dispute.

(Signed) Sechele, Kgari, Kgosidintsi, Sebele.

Witnesses: (Signed) Fred W. Walker and Geo. Grey [Local traders]

[Additional note] I certify that the foregoing was written by Kgari, son of Sechele. The signatures were written by him by direction of Sechele, Sebele, and Kgosidintse. Done before me on this 28th day of April 1885.
(Signed) S.H. Edwards, Major.

¹⁵ BPP C.4588, Enclosure 34: Sir C. Warrn to High Commissioner, "C"

Whatever may have been his true reservations about the imposition of the Protectorate, at no point did Sechele entertain illusions about directly resisting the British, as he had in the past against the Boers. As early as 1868 when asked if he would fight them, he had stated: "How could I? The great English would eat me up in one day."¹⁶

From Molepolole, Warren proceeded to Shoshong, where Kgosi Khama III rather more enthusiastically welcomed his announcement of the Protectorate at a Kgotla meeting, though most of the Bangwato were reported to be privately opposed to the British presence.

During the meeting, most of the speakers emphasised their concern that the land of the Bangwato should not be sold to white men. There was also insistence that their law banning alcohol from the country should be upheld. For his part, Kgosi Khama concluded the gathering with the following words (official English translation):

"Concerning these words you have spoken, wherein the Bamangwato can help in this Protectorate, I reply that the land of the Bamangwato is a very large land stretching far away. It is our hunting ground. It is not [just] all our grazing and garden ground. It is by this hunting ground that we can help, and if our help is sought, then laying aside of parts of such country for the purpose of the English Government would be the way. It is a great country but you can see by all the people present that we are very numerous, and our flocks and garden grounds ought not to be narrowed unduly. What we want is to go forward and improve, and I think we can do so if wisely connected with the English, for after we have seen your ways we shall take up some of them. But at first we shall not be able to understand, as we do not know how you would take possession of a country like this, but we are willing to be taught by the English how to manage a country like this, and we put confidence in the way they do things."¹⁷

The following day Khama signed a document, drafted by Warren's accomplice the Rev. John Mackenzie, in which it was stated:

"I, Khama, Chief of the Bamangwato, with my younger brothers, and heads of my town, express my gratitude at the coming of the messengers of the Queen of England, and for the announcement to me of the

¹⁶ *Transvaal Argus* (Potchefstroom) June 10, 1868.

¹⁷ BPP C. 4588 "E" Meeting between Sir C. Warren and Khama, Chief of Bamangwato, with his Councillor, at Shoshong, 12th May 1885.

Protectorate which has been established by desire of the Queen, and which has come to help the law of the Bamangwato also. I give thanks for the words of the Queen, which I have heard, and I accept of the friendship and protection of the Government of England within the Bamangwato country. Further, I give to the Queen to make laws and to change them in the country of the Bamangwato, with reference to both black and white. Nevertheless, I am not baffled in the Government of my town or in deciding cases among my own people according to custom; but again I do not refuse help in these offices. Although this is so, I have to say that there are certain laws of my country, which the Queen of England finds in operation, and which are advantageous for my people, and I wish these laws should be established, and not taken away by the Government of England. I refer to the law concerning intoxicating drinks, that they should not enter the country of the Bamangwato whether among black or white people. I refer further to our law, which declares that the lands of the Bamangwato are not saleable. I say this law also is good. Let it be upheld and continue to be law."¹⁸

In accepting protection, Khama, at Mackenzie's urging, further offered the British large tracts of land so that "the English people should come and live in it".

Mackenzie's translation of Khama's words and deeds may be treated with caution. The archetype of a "missionary imperialist," it is evident from his own correspondence as well as the perceptions of others that throughout the expedition the Reverend deeply biased. Notwithstanding possible textual manipulations, it nonetheless remains clear from subsequent events that Khama hoped that by taking up Mackenzie's suggestion of some form of land offer, he and his people would not be made to pay taxes to the British. As it was, much of the land he had offered was actually occupied by neighbouring groups, such as the Bakalanga, Batawana, Bakwena, and Bakgatla.

Thereafter, Warren returned to Molepolole where Sechele was pressured to reach a similar agreement. The Mokwena thus cannily agreed to give up his own claims to Bakgatla багаKgafela occupied lands east of the

¹⁸ BPP C.4588 "G" "Proposals of Chief Khama" 13 May 1885, signed by Khama and 43 others. Mackenzie's authorship- A.J. Dachs (edit.) *Papers of John Mackenzie* (Johannesburg, 1975) p. 195, letter to Mrs. Mackenzie 12 May 1885. The proposals were drafted by Mackenzie and recopied by Edwin Lloyd. Lloyd's oft quoted comment, LMS London Missionary Society Papers (LMS)(originals at London, microfiche copies at University of Botswana Library and BNA) Lloyd 1 June 1885, that Khama had "not taken any irrevocable step" is simply naive.

Notwane and parts of the western Kgalagadi bordering on Namibia "as long as my people should be able to hunt there."

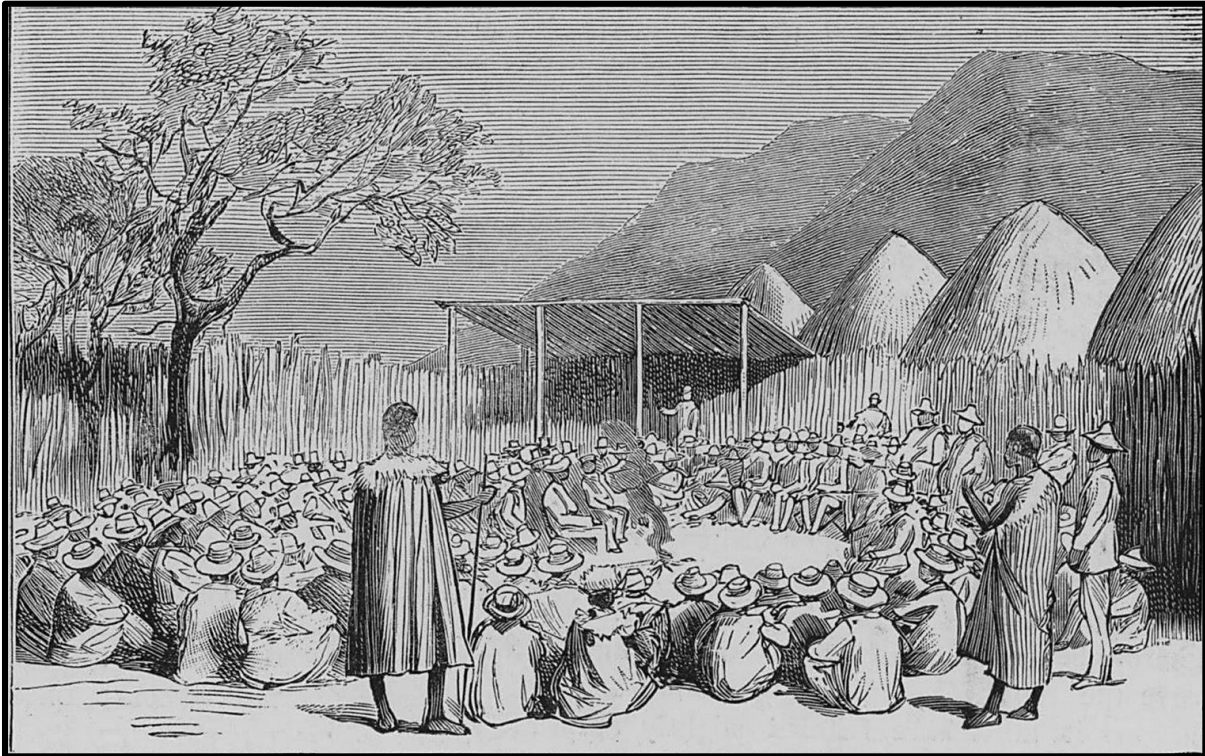


Fig. 12: "Meeting at Shoshong to discuss the Protectorate" *The Graphic*, July 25, 1885.

Sechele further affirmed that: "Concerning the laws which shall be established in the country, I wish to rule among my people according to custom, but I give to the Queen to rule among white people wherever they are."¹⁹

Thereafter, Warren went to Kanye, where Kgosi Gaseitsiwe also pressed for an agreement. This resulted in the Bangwaketse giving up their residual claims to Gamalete and Hukuntsi.²⁰

Though they dismissed the land concessions made by Gaseitsiwe and Sechele as being of little substance, Warren and Mackenzie hoped to use Khama's "magnificent offer" as the basis for creating a white settler colony. The two submitted a plan to carve out 7,000 farms of about 6,000 acres each. Fortunately, this idea was overruled from above. The Colonial Office instead accepted its South African High Commissioner, Sir Hercules Robinson's conclusion that:

¹⁹ BPP C.4588 "H" Proposals of Chief Sechele, 25th May 1885.

²⁰ BPP C. 4588 "I" Proposals of Chief Gaseitsiwe, 29th May, 1885.

"As to the country north of the Molopo River it appears to me that we have no interest in it, except as a road to the interior. I would suggest, therefore, that we should confine ourselves to preventing that part of the Protectorate being occupied by either Filibusters or Foreign powers, doing, for present, as little as possible in the way of administration or settlement. The Chiefs, Gatziziba [Gaseitsiwe], Sechele, and Khama, might be left to govern their own tribes in their own fashion, and their offer of lands to Her Majesty's Government ...should be refused."²¹

It was therefore decided that the British presence north of the Molopo would be limited to occasional police patrols to "protect Sechele's country and the country neighbouring to Shoshong." This arrangement suited the Batswana, who were reported to have an "utter distaste for the rule or control of the white man."²²

On September 30, 1885 what was by then British Bechuanaland was administratively divided at the Molopo River. The *merafe* located south of the river, who now lived in the shadow of white settlers, became part of the Crown Colony of British Bechuanaland, which in 1895 was incorporated into the Cape Colony.²³

²¹ BPP C.4588 Stanley to Robinson 13 August 1885.

²² London Missionary Society (LMS) Howard Williams 1889 Annual Report, Molepolole

²³ For events south of the Molopo see Kevin Shillington *The Colonization of the Southern Tswana, 1870-1900* (Braamfontein, 1985).

The legal basis for the Protectorate was subsequently defined by the Colonial Office in its February 1891 "Memorandum as to the Jurisdiction and Administrative Powers of a European State holding Protectorates in Africa," a landmark document authored by an official named John Bramston. Although specifically drafted for Bechuanaland, it was subsequently applied to other imperial jurisdictions on the continent.²⁴

In his memo, Bramston defined Bechuanaland as: "An uncivilized territory to which Europeans resort in greater or less numbers, and where, inasmuch as the native rulers of the territory are incapable of maintaining peace, order and good government among Europeans, the protecting Power maintains courts, police and other institutions for the control, safety and benefit of its own subjects and of the natives."

Bramston further argued that sovereignty in "an uncivilized African territory" could be "exercised by the same methods as if the ruler had ceded his whole country to her Majesty." On the further assumption that sovereignty is inherently indivisible, he concluded that inasmuch as Britain could claim legal jurisdiction over any Europeans in an "uncivilized territory" it had the sovereign right as a "civilized power" to install its own courts and government officers as the supreme legal authorities. In other words, Britain's self-proclaimed right to rule over Botswana was legally justified not as an initiative to protect Batswana from the Boers or any other threat, but rather to protect any and all Europeans from Batswana! The British Crown thus had "unfettered and unlimited power to legislate for the government of and administration of justice among the native tribes in the Bechuanaland Protectorate."

Bramston's memorandum had been motivated by the legal claims of four Dikgosi – Bathoen I, Linchwe I, Moremi II, and Sechele I - that they, rather than Mmamosadinyana, were the "sovereigns of the soil" in their respective territories. In asserting their claims, each of the rulers had granted economic concessions that were contradictory to the rights then also being claimed by Cecil Rhodes' British South Africa Company, which were based on a Royal Charter granted to the company in the name of the British Crown.

The matter became critical when the British High Commissioner's own legal advisor, W.P. Schreiner, concluded that the communications of Gaseitsiwe, Khama III, and Sechele I when accepting the Protectorate in 1885: "do not per se convey to the Crown any legal jurisdiction within the

²⁴ PRO CO 879/34/410 "Memorandum as to the Jurisdiction and Administrative Powers of a European State holding Protectorates in Africa" February 1890.

territories of those Chiefs" so that "the delegation to the British South Africa Company of a legal jurisdiction founded upon the due acceptance of the proposals referred to, would be an act requiring for its validity the approval or assent of the Chiefs concerned."²⁵

Based on Bramston's reversal of Schreiner's opinion, another Order-in-Council was issued in May 1891 that authorized the High Commissioner to enact laws for "the administration of justice, the raising of revenue and generally for peace, order and good government of all persons within this jurisdiction including the prohibition of acts tending to disturb the public peace." These same sovereign powers were formally transferred from the British Crown to the new Government of the Republic of Botswana.²⁶

V - PROFILE BAKWENA KGOSI SECHELE I (c.1810-92)



Fig. 14: Kgosi Sechele in 1865, photos by Gustav Fritsch

As ruler of the Bakwena bagaKgabo from around 1833 to 1892, Sechele was a tireless champion of Batswana freedom and unity. He was the leading figure in nineteenth-century Botswana, with his greatest achievement being his victory over the Transvaal Boers in the Batswana-Boer War of 1852-53. Botswana's eastern border with South Africa, from Mashatu to the Barolong Farms, is a legacy of the armed struggle he led by first by resisting an invading Boer commando at Dimawe, and subsequently launching raids on Boer farms in the Madikwe region. Based on these feats alone, Sechele can be appreciated for having laid the

²⁵ PRO CO 879/32/392 Loch to Knutsford 17 June 1890 enclosing 10 June legal opinion by W.P. Schreiner.

²⁶ Discussion of evolution of perceptions about British Protection see: Morton, B. & Ramsay, J. "The Invention and Perpetuation of Botswana's National Mythology, 1885-1966" available online @ https://www.academia.edu/88313990/The_Invention_and_Perpetuation_of_Botswana_s_National_Mythology_1885_1966

groundwork for modern Botswana. Sechele's nation-building legacy is reflected in the following passage from Rev. Roger Price's 1892 obituary:²⁷

"It was also about this time that the Transvaal Boers began to bring themselves into hostile contact with the native tribes on their borders. Sechele was attacked by them, but not conquered. Indeed, he retaliated upon the Boers so successfully; the fainthearted native chiefs living on the Boer border came with their tribes and placed themselves under Sechele. He now encouraged English traders to come into the country, and he, and the tribes under him, possessed themselves of guns and ammunition and horses, and became formidable opponents of Boer aggression."

However, there was more to Sechele than his role as a pioneer resistance leader against white settler colonialism. A self-educated genius, he was also an early supporter of education, industrial technology, and new horticultural practices in the region. No indigenous figure played a bigger role in establishing Christianity in Southern Africa. By the time of his death, his name was recognized in Europe and North America, as well as Southern Africa.



Fig. 15: Lantern slide of Sechele, Church of Scotland Foreign Missions Committee, c. 1900

²⁷ In the February, 1893 edition of *The Chronicle*, London Missionary Society

Sechele was born around 1810 as the eldest son of Kgosi Motswasele II and his Mohumagadi oMogolo, Sejelo (the daughter of Ramodisa aMotswasele I). After his father's execution during a *letsholo* or armed gathering in approximately 1821, Sechele went into exile with his uncle Segokotlo aLegwale, along with his brothers and other supporters. Just before his death, Motswasele is said to have prophesied that if his relatives killed him, the land would be overrun by ants—first swarms of black ants, then white ants. In later years, his words were seen as foretelling the coming upheavals caused first by the invading Makololo and Amandebele, then by the Boers and British.²⁸

The young Sechele spent the next ten years wandering, at one point; it is said, even surviving as a humble hunter-gatherer in the Kgalagadi. During much of the period, he resided among the Bangwato, being initiated into their MaLomakgomo regiment (c.1825.) He travelled as far as the Matopos with the Mongwato Kgosi Kgari I and was later ransomed from Makololo captivity by Kgari's successor Sedimo.

Following the death of Motswasele II, the Bakwena had become divided. By 1831 there were three factions: the "Bamosima" under Molese aLegwale, the BooRatshosa or "BaMakakana" under Bubi (who succeeded his brother Moruakgomo), and a third group under Kgame aMonametse. Reuniting his father's *morafe* thus became one of Sechele's primary goals; a task he began in c.1831 when he overthrew his uncle Molese aLegwale in a bloodless trial of strength. The reunification of the Bakwena was completed in 1845 when Sechele overcame BooRaTshosa opposition.

During the 1830s Sechele had to also struggle to keep his, then small, community together and free of the Makololo and Amandebele. After a final Amandebele attack on his people at Shokwane, in 1844, Sechele moved to the Chonwane (Chonuane/Tshonwane), where he hosted a stream of European traders and hunters, including many British military officers on furlough, as well as his first of many resident missionaries, Dr David Livingstone. As one of his guests, Gordon Cumming, noted at the time:

²⁸ Sechele's life in greater detail can be found in Vol. 1 of Jeff Ramsay "The rise and fall of the Bakwena dynasty of South Central Botswana, 1820-1940" Boston University PhD. Thesis, Two volumes, 1991, available @ https://www.academia.edu/90978159/Jeff_Ramsay_The_rise_and_fall_of_the_Bakwena_dynasty_of_South_Central_Botswana. Biography of Sechele by this author forthcoming.

*"A short time previous to my arrival, a rumour having reached Sichely that he was likely to be attacked by emigrant Boers, he suddenly resolved to secure his city with a wall of stones, which he at once commenced erecting. It was now completed, entirely surrounding the town, with loopholes at intervals all along through which to play upon the advancing enemy with the muskets which he had resolved to purchase from hunters and traders like myself."*²⁹

Livingstone similarly described the fortress, adding: "the shape of the whole is a sort of triangle."³⁰

Sechele purchased his firearms through the sale of ivory, ostrich feathers, and other game-products. As he obtained more guns, he was able to arm ever-larger hunting parties. With his knowledge of arithmetic, literacy and access to market information, Sechele also emerged as an intermediary for other Batswana.



Fig. 16: Water colour painting by Alfred Dolman of his party trading for ivory and rhino horn with Sechele in 1851. The original painting is in the collection of the Botswana National Museum and Art Gallery

Sechele was renowned as a skilled marksman. The English poet and adventurer Henry Methuen observed an 1844 incident when the Mokwena pressured Andrew Bain to sell him his large 4-bore rifle. Bain agreed only if Sechele could hit a distant anthill with it, confidently believing that someone without experience and a proper mount could not accurately fire

²⁹ Cumming, *A Hunter's Life in South Africa*, 61. The ruins of Tshonwane/Chonuane are within South Africa, just over 10 km east of the Ramotswa border gate.

³⁰ I. Schapera, ed., *Livingstone Family Letters, 1841–56* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1959), I, 142. Also Livingstone Online, www.livingstoneonline.ucl.ac.uk letter Livingstone to J.R. Bennet (26 December 1845): 'This is an enterprising man. He built a stone wall entirely round his town with loop holes &c. and fruit of his own invention:' original document in National Library of Scotland, M.S. 10707, ff. 21r-22, cc. 0141

the "monster gun." As a precaution, he overloaded the barrel, but Sechele hit the target with one shot.

By 1849, Sechele was sourcing custom-built ammunition from Birmingham manufacturers. He acquired his own moulds for high-calibre spherical-conical bullets and advanced rifles to fire them. Designed for hunting elephants, the Mokwena's guns outperformed anything in the Boer arsenal. The Boers were also uneasy about his acquisition of a six-pounder cannon.

In 1847, the Bakwena abandoned Chonwane to resettle at Kolobeng and Dimawe.

As Sechele's armoury grew, more and more Batswana came to Kweneng to seek refuge from Boer oppression. In 1849, the number of inhabitants at Kolobeng-Dimawe numbered only 2,384 Bakwena and 1,236 Bakaa, but by 1873, Sechele's subjects were said to number 35,000, plus another 18-20,000 members of "allied groups". The Bakgatla bagaMmanaana of Moshupa, Thamaga, and GaMafikana, the Bakgatla bagaKgafela of the Kgatleng District, Bahurutshe of Mmankodi and Manyana, Balete, and Batlokwa are among the larger groups who settled in Botswana seeking Sechele's protection.

Sechele's growing strength frightened the Transvaal Boers who, in August 1852, invaded Botswana with the purpose of establishing their hegemony. At Dimawe a united Batswana force of Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bakaa, Bakgatla bagaMmanaana and others, confronted the Boer Commando. An inconclusive battle was fought, in which 36 Boers and 91 Batswana are known to have died.³¹

Following the successful defence of Dimawe, the Boers abandoned their invasion. However, a further six months of fighting ensued, during which time Sechele and his allies launched counter-raids into the Transvaal, which led the Boers to abandon all their farms west of Rustenburg and Potchefstroom. The South African Commercial Advertiser, reported:

"That the natives had united in a strong body, followed up the retreating force of Boers, and fallen upon the farmers in the Mirique district, and every one of these has been obliged to fall back with the commando upon

³¹ Ramsay, J. "The Batswana-Boer War of 1852-53: How the Batswana Achieved Victory" in Botswana Notes and Records, 1991

*the Mooi River. Great destruction, of course marked the progress of the conquering natives. Every homestead has been burned, and standing corn ripe for sickle, together with vineyards and gardens, which were then in full bloom, have been entirely destroyed.*³²

Also, from the Diary of James Chapman, November 1852: *"All the Boers are still in laager, they have been in laager a long time. They dare not venture on their farms for fear of Sechele. Their cattle are dying fast being too many together, and disease is amongst them."*³³

With the Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bakaa and Bakgatla on the offensive others joined the struggle, including the Balete, Bahurutse, Bangwato, Barolong and Batlokwa. In November 1852, Boers envoys travelled to Dithubaruba seeking an end to the raids.

In January 1853, the Boer leader Andries Pretorius agreed to Sechele's terms for peace, resulting in a truce in the following month. Thereafter, the Bakwena defended the border in alliance with the Bangwaketse, Bangwato and Barolong. In 1860 Andries son, Transvaal President Martinus Pretorius, hosting Sechele on a "state visit".

Between February and June 1853 Sechele travelled to Bloemfontein and Cape Town on an unsuccessful mission to convince the British to renounce the Sand River Convention. This treaty between the British and Boers forbade the further sale of arms to black Africans. In protest of this arrangement, Sechele temporarily closed the road through Botswana to most British traders. Yet, despite the Convention, Sechele continued to acquire armaments, including breech-loading rifles.

Besides defending Botswana against the Boers, Sechele is remembered for his educational and religious legacy. In 1845, he began his collaboration with the L.M.S. missionary David Livingstone, for whom the Bakwena built Botswana's first school and church at Kolobeng. The Kgosi later welcomed the Hermannsburg (Lutheran) church to Botswana. Khama III was converted to Christianity while staying with the Bakwena at Dithubaruba. Sechele also helped spread the gospel to the Batawana, Balози, and Amandebele. In 1860, he rescued the survivors of the Helmore-Price, "Mmakololo mission."

³² *South African Commercial Advertiser*, May 14, 1853.

³³ Chapman, J. ""Travels in the Interior of Africa [1971 edition] p. 84].

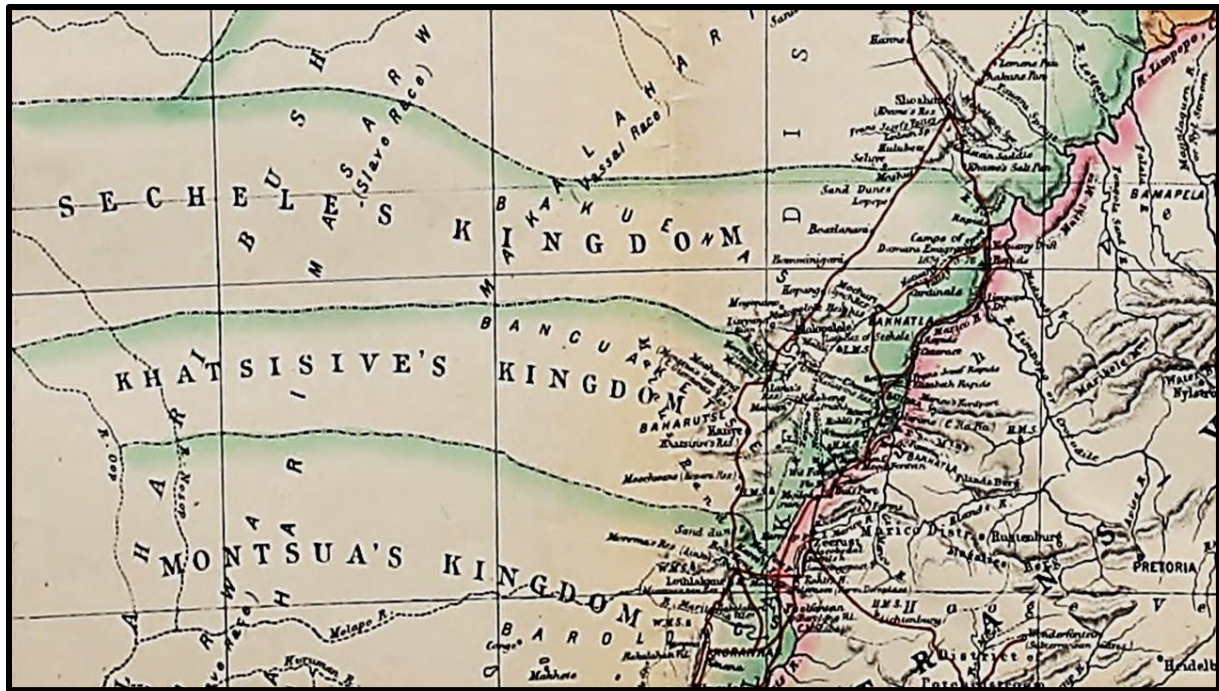


Fig. 17: From the 1881 map published by Dr Emil Holub.

Sechele's support for Christianity went hand in hand with his support for education. By 1845, he had learned how read, write, and do arithmetic. Thereafter he encouraged his people to become literate, going so far as to conduct classes in his kgotla, while sending his own children and others away for further studies. His interest in agricultural innovation led to the introduction of metal ploughs, dam irrigation and new crops such as citrus and wheat. He also introduced conservation measures to sustain the trade in local game products.

Between 1857 and 1885, Sechele led regional politics. On four occasions (1858, 1859, 1866, 1872), he removed Bangwato rulers, eventually supporting Khama III's rise to power. In 1857, he also helped politically reunite the Bangwaketse under Gaseitsiwe's leadership. However, his biggest setback happened between 1875 and 82 when he lost control of the Kgatleng after fierce fighting with the Bakgatla bagaKgafela, whom he had originally settled at Mochudi.

When the British declared the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885, they regarded Sechele and Khama as the two main Dikgosi of the region. However, unlike the Bangwato ruler, Sechele was sceptical of British rule. In his final years, he fought to preserve Batswana independence amid increasing colonial interference.

Sechele died on September 26, 1892. According to local traditions, ominous signs accompanied the passing of the great Mokwena. A certain Rangwadi prophesied that it marked the beginning of the end of the dynasty. Songs of doom were sung. One of these, "Diremogolo," spoke of a white man who shouted at the land and would come to steal Bogosi jwa Bakwena. Another song, "Rasekete," alluded to impending internal conflicts, with its chorus describing a kgosi who dies in possession of fine black and white cattle, which then turned grey and grew dangerous horns.³⁴

As news of the death spread through Molepolole, women invaded the kgotla at Kgosing, crying "Our king is dead; where shall we flee?"

Thereafter, the late Kgosi's brother Kgositantsi convened a *Pitso ya Lebya*, where the men gathered to formally sanction the succession of Sechele's heir, Kgosi Sebele I. "Lebya" is a stone or clay mortar in which were fired medicines to strengthen the new kgosi, who would then, in turn, use the contents to doctor his brothers based on their putative ranking. At the ceremony, other medicines were boiled in large clay pots and sprayed on all in attendance by an *ngaka* using an animal tail whisk. Sechele's other sons, including Sebele's half-brother Kgari, who would subsequently, albeit unsuccessfully, lay claim to the throne, along with the rest of the *Pitso*, reportedly accepted their medicine, though some with a notable lack of enthusiasm (from the opening stanza of leboko la ga Sebele I):

"Motshatsha mogakatsa mala, More mojewa o Botlhoko, Mokgalo o botlhoko, monna, Rrapholotshega; Jaana o godile o fetwa fela, O ka jewa ke monna o ka moshomola legano, Mme re o atla fela, re o epile; Ga fela bo-shokgo, bo-magorometsa." ["Noxious herb that inflames the bowels, medicine that's bitter when eaten, the buffalo-thorn is bitter, Rapholostshega; Now, having grown it is even worse, if eaten by someone it can injure your mouth; but we just take it having dug it up; other kinds of medicine are finished."]

Although the location of Sechele's secret burial site and the distribution of the royal cattle gave rise to internal disputes, outwardly, the morafe presented a united front, as reflected in accounts and the photo of Kgosi Sebele I's installation ceremony.

³⁴ Account of Sechele's death with citations in Ramsay (1991), pp. 218-219.

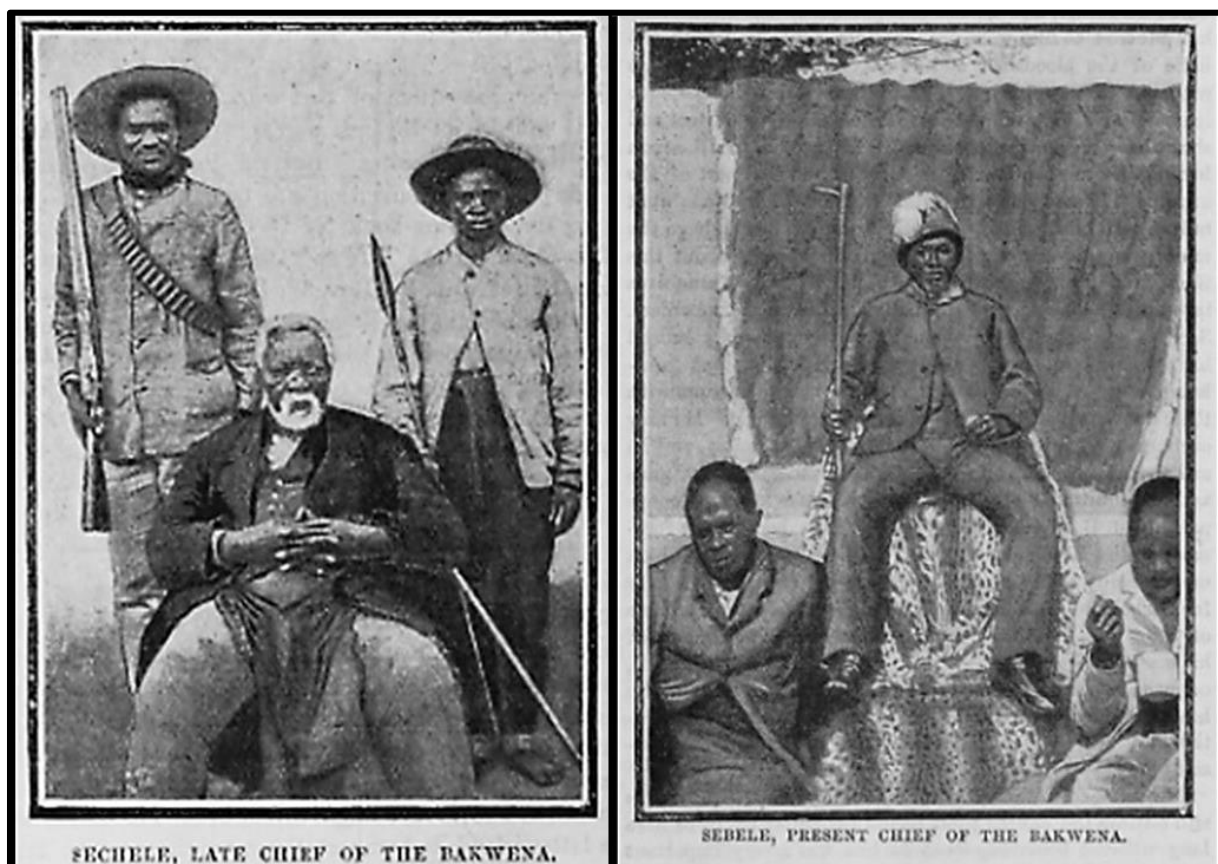


Fig. 18 Sechele, late in life, and the September 1892 coronation of his son and successor Sebele, from the February 1893 edition of *The Chronical*.